

BEAVER CREEK FARM



EDWARD W. TOWNSEND



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BEAVER CREEK FARM



"Now, young fellow, we'll go ashore."

[Page 135.]

BEAVER CREEK FARM

By

EDWARD W. TOWNSEND

AUTHOR OF

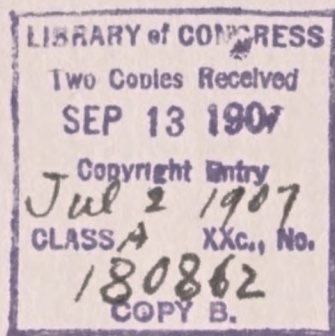
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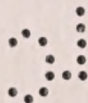
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TO

FREDERICK B. LAKE, JR.

WHO STANDS WELL WITH HIS BOOKS;
IS MODEST AND BRAVE; AND WHO HAS SO
WELL DISPOSED OF HIS ELEVEN YEARS OF LIFE
THAT HE CAN SWIM FAST, SHOOT STRAIGHT, AND WALK
FAR UP THE CAÑONS WHERE THE QUAIL CALL COAX-
INGLY, AND OVER THE MOUNTAINS WHERE
THE SHY DEER ARE—THIS BOOK IS
DEDICATED BY HIS AFFECTION-
ATE AND OBEDIENT UNCLE,
THE AUTHOR

MONTCLAIR, 1907.

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BEAVER CREEK FARM

CHAPTER I

OFF FOR THE FARM

A GENTLEMAN, smiling brightly and looking as if the last thing in the world he would reveal was that he had anything to feel sad about; a lady who looked as if she were near to crying and didn't care who knew it; a lad, eleven years of age, or so, tearful and cheerful by turns; a servant in livery, looking indifferent to the whole world, walked down the Grand Central Station and boarded a train which was about ready to start. The gentleman tipped the car porter and gave cigars to the conductor; the servant deposited a traveling bag before a seat; and the lady repeated cautions and instructions to the boy.

"All aboard!" sang the conductor from the outside, and the porter warned the lady and

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gentleman that if they were not going they should leave the car. But the boy had to be once more hugged and kissed by father and mother, to which he responded with diminishing bravery. On the opposite side of the aisle sat a notably pretty young lady, intently reading a book, to whom the mother now turned with a sudden assumption of smiles, and said, "My little boy—I mean my son—is traveling alone for the first time. Would you be kind enough——"

"Lady!" called the porter, "if you don't get off mighty sudden you can't get off till Pough-keepsie."

The mother thrust a card into the young lady's hand, saying, even as the gentleman hurried her from the car, "You understand? Thank you, oh, ever so much!"

"Certainly, madam," replied the young lady, scarcely raising her eyes from her book. She put the card into her reticule without looking at it and resumed her reading.

The train slowly drew out; the boy saw, somewhat mistily, through his window his father and mother waving good-bys to him, and he thought

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he saw the servant bestow a reassuring wink. Then he looked about with eager interest, saw that he was the only young gentleman of his age in the car, and was glad of it, as he did not feel like talking just then, but wanted to enjoy this new experience alone.

“Now,” he said to himself, “this is something like it, I say. No one to be telling you all the time not to do this and that, no governess feeding you useful information about the things you see out of the windows. This is traveling like a man, this is; and when a fellow gets to be as old as I am he should travel like a man, and do everything like a man.”

He glanced over at the young lady, still deep in her book, and he smiled a smile which plainly said, “Huh! She look after me? Why, I could look after her, rather. She’s pretty, though, and I like pretty women. I’ll keep an eye on her, and if she needs any help I’ll give it to her. That’s what I’ll do.”

Just then the conductor came along, calling, “Tickets! All tickets, please.”

When he came to the boy’s chair he had a friendly smile as he said:

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"Now, young man, your tickets, please."

The young man became crimson, and fidgeted about uncomfortably.

"All tickets, please," repeated the conductor.

"My father had them," the boy said. "Didn't he give them to you?"

"He didn't," the conductor said, and added to himself, "He was mighty busy giving me cigars, though. I wonder if this is a new trick to work a free ride?" Then he added briskly, "You can pay me your fare, and your father can get your tickets redeemed."

The boy took out his purse, opened it ruefully, and handed the conductor its only contents—a dollar bill.

"Is this all you have?" the conductor asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy. "But take out for the fare. I'll eat a light lunch."

"Yes, you'd eat a very light lunch on the change from this," the conductor said with a laugh.

This attracted the attention of the young lady, whose interest in her book had kept her from seeing until now that her unasked-for charge was in trouble. She crossed the

OFF FOR THE FARM

aisle, beamed pleasantly on the boy, and asked:

“Oh, what is it, please?”

The conductor explained: fare and chair, he said, would be nine dollars.

The boy gasped, and the young lady, too, looked as if she had heard dismal news. But she opened her purse, and her eyes fell on the card the boy's mother had given her. Something astonished her even more than the thought that she was expected to pay the “chair and fare.”

“Are you Mrs. Hulburt's son?” she asked, looking from the card to the boy. “Mrs. Orville Hulburt?”

“Yes, ma'am; I'm Orville Hulburt, Jr.,” and he took from his pocket a card which affirmed his name in finely engraved script.

This quickly settled something in the young lady's mind, for she paid the charges to the conductor, and said to Orville that the affair had revealed a coincidence; she, too, was going not only to the same station, but was to visit the same house with him if, as she supposed, he was going to his grandfather, Cyrus Hul-

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burt. Orville said he was, and she explained that she was going there to see if she would like to teach the district school.

Orville opened his eyes wide at this; he knew that his grandfather planned to have him remain at Beaver Creek Farm for at least one term of the district school—to make a real boy of him, Squire Hulburt said. But in all his guesses as to what sort of a teacher he would have, he never pictured one in the least like the very pretty young lady now talking with him in such a jolly way.

When lunch time came Orville frankly told her that he had only one dollar, but he asked her to take that and buy her lunch; he would keep his appetite for some of his grandmother's pies, which he had heard all his life were better than any others in the world. Orville said this because he could not help seeing, when the young lady paid his fare, that there were only a few small coins left in her purse. But they were saved the discomfort of a meager lunch—and I hold that those who advocate light lunches are only confessing their dyspepsia—by the appearance of the conductor with the

OFF FOR THE FARM

money to repay the young lady. He had received a dispatch at Poughkeepsie which explained matters and ordered him to pass the young man along.

“And he must be a little swell,” the conductor whispered to the young lady, “for the president of the road himself sent the message.”

His agreeable companion told Orville that her name was Marion Bolton, and that she had just been graduated from a college where women are taught to be teachers, a statement which astonished him, for he had been instructed by a governess who, he had heard his father say, didn't know enough about teaching to last her overnight, and Orville supposed that all teachers were alike. Orville and the young lady were soon chummy, and Orville observed that she was much unlike his governess—especially in respect to her eyes and hair, which were not strong points with the governess, though she had many, the palm of her hand being one, as her pupil recalled.

CHAPTER II

ORREY RIGHTS THINGS

AT their station, Beaver Creek, our travelers had a disappointment, for Squire Hulburt was not there to meet them. Instead, a tall, thin man stood at the heads of a pair of horses, shouting over and over:

“Orville Hulburt! Orville Hulburt!”

“Well, what do you want?” Orville asked, approaching the man.

“Want Orville Hulburt,” the man replied. “If you’re Orville, I’m Scudder.”

“Oh, are you?” the boy asked, eyeing the man with greater interest, for he had heard almost as much about Scudder as about his grandmother’s pies. “Well, Scudder, you’ve got good lungs, anyway. Here’s the checks for Miss Bolton’s baggage and mine. Look sharp now, and get them aboard this trap.”

ORREY RIGHTS THINGS

Hearing this brave speech, Scudder laughed and exclaimed:

“No doubt about you being the Squire’s grandson—that’s the Squire’s talk, all over.”

The Squire, Scudder explained, was appraising a farm he thought of buying, so he could not meet the train. “Fact is,” added Scudder, “the Squire wants to own about all the land there is out of doors.”

They were soon driving rapidly into the hills toward the Green Mountains, the road becoming steeper and the valley narrower as they progressed. They passed on their way more than one of those curious formations which give such decided character to the landscape—hills coming abruptly out of the plains, all having gradual slopes upon the east and bold, rugged cliffs on their western sides; one of nature’s pranks in spreading her blanket over the earth with which Orville was to become familiar in the most dramatic adventure of his life.

Miss Bolton and Orville were silent because they were too interested in the scenery and life about them to want to talk; a fortunate thing, for Scudder talked incessantly. He told who

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lived in each of the farmhouses passed, pointed out cider mills, sugar groves, the vast barns of the dairy farmers; called attention to the bunches of Morgan colts, and especially to the flocks of Merino sheep now and then seen in the pastures. He was so machinelike in these disclosures that it is not likely an interruption by either of his passengers would have stopped him; but finally he became quiet as the horses began to walk up the last hill leading to the plateau on which Beaver Creek Farm was situated, and his passengers noticed that his back expressed some feeling which sent ripples of emotion up and down his long spine, and ended in final shakes of his head. At last he gave voice.

“Orville,” he said, not turning his head but speaking more slowly and intensely, “how’s Nelly?”

“Nelly who?” inquired Orville in surprise.

“Guess you know your own mother,” commented Scudder by way of reply.

“Her name is Helen,” said the boy.

“Christened Helen; called Nelly,” said Scudder calmly, and Orville reflected with a laugh

ORREY RIGHTS THINGS

the amusement he saw in Miss Bolton's merry eyes.

"Mamma is well. She sent some presents to you."

"Well, where are they?" Scudder demanded eagerly, turning around now.

He was assured that the presents were in the trunk, and remained silent for the rest of the drive, speculating upon the nature of the presents from the woman upon whom he had been a faithful attendant when she was a tom-boy on a farm in the neighborhood, and for whom, as a fine city lady, he felt a loyalty of devotion which was almost worship.

The road they traveled—still called the plank road, though its last plank rotted away half a century ago, and which was once the main highway to the distant seacoast—was rough, and deep with dust, and this made the contrast more noticeable when Scudder turned into the private driveway of the Farm. This was level, graveled, clean, and bordered with elms whose spreading tops met far overhead.

Miss Bolton noticed these signs of careful up-keep with great interest; noticed that on

BEAVER CREEK FARM

both sides of the drive there were lawns and flowers, and that every detail showed a pleasing difference between this place and the ragged, unkempt farmhouse grounds they had passed. Scudder drew up before the house where, on a veranda, stood a lady whose cheerful eyes grew moist as she caught sight of Orville.

The boy leaped from the station wagon before it stopped and ran to her.

“Hello, grandmamma!” he cried, and added, as he had been instructed: “Mamma, papa, and the little kids send you lots of love and these,” and he kissed the lady, who held him with one arm while she extended a hand to greet Miss Bolton. That lady’s wonder grew as she noted the modern elegance of Mrs. Hulburt’s dress, the signs of comfort seen about the broad veranda—lounging chairs, a book-strewn table, the rug spread under the hammock. And she could not help noting a pipe, cap, and tennis racket lying carelessly by the hammock. Such things did not suggest the conditions she expected to find when she accepted an invitation to “look over” an offer to teach a country

ORREY RIGHTS THINGS

district school. As she observed her surroundings she was being studied with perhaps as much interest by Mrs. Hulburt, who was saying to her:

“The maid will show you your room. When you are ready, come down and have tea. You must be tired, my dear.”

Mrs. Hulburt, although she was as unlike as possible what Miss Bolton expected to find her, was just the kind of a woman one likes to be addressed by as “my dear.” You knew as soon as ever you saw her that that was not her habit of speech; that she was one who observed keenly, and reserved her “my dears” for those who pleased her.

“This young man,” she added, tightening her arm about Orville, “need not wash the dust from his face before he has something to eat.”

While Orville was permitting his grandmother to give him just one more piece of apple pie, and one more glass of fresh milk, as he gravely answered her questions about his father and mother and the little sisters in the nursery, Miss Bolton reappeared on the veranda, and saw, idling in the hammock, a

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young man she at once related to the pipe, cap, and racket. At sight of her he arose, approached her, and asked gravely: "Is this Miss Bolton?"

She assured him that she was.

"Miss Marion Bolton, according to your letters."

When he mentioned her letters she looked at him in surprise.

"I am Mr. Hulburt," he said, as if in answer to her look.

"Indeed!" she said. "I did not know—that is, I thought——"

"Pardon me, young lady," he interrupted, "you are not required to think in your capacity as teacher. I've had instructors who thought, and they were beastly bores. You will please answer a few questions before we have tea. Do you play tennis?"

"Why, yes, I do, rather badly. But I had an idea——"

"Your idea may be interesting," he again interrupted, "but we will not consider it just now."

Miss Bolton's color began to rise, and she

ORREY RIGHTS THINGS

looked at the young man with a puzzled expression as he continued:

“What is important to consider now is whether you ride, and, if you do, whether on a sidesaddle or *en cavalier*.”

“Really, sir, this does not seem pertinent to——”

“Is it becoming in a young lady to tell as old a man as I am that he is impertinent? But I will overlook that for the present. Do you prefer rowing on the lake—Pond, they call it—by moonlight or dancing in the barn?”

“Sir!” she exclaimed. “I do not believe you have asked me here to answer such silly questions. I almost doubt if you are Mr. Hulburt.”

“This is, indeed, the age of disbelief,” the young man said with a sigh. “I assure you that I am Mr. Hulburt, and I wish to know——”

Miss Bolton did not hear what else he said, for at that moment an older man, who had just alighted from a horse, came up the steps and walked softly forward until he laid his hand on the young man’s shoulder, saying:

“Yes, Miss Bolton, this is Mr. Hulburt—Mr.

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Jack Hulburt, my nephew—and the most impudent, graceless scamp in seven counties.”

This introduction did not abash the young man in the least, for he replied: “ Why, uncle, how can you say such a thing of one who lives only to help Miss Bolton in her school work? Miss Bolton, do not heed my uncle’s words. He is a person of a quick and testy temper, and strive as I may——”

“ Jack, go and ask your aunt when we may have some tea,” said the Squire. But Miss Bolton did not know that the newcomer was Squire Hulburt. She had been quizzed by one man, she knew that; and while he was too good-natured and too good-looking for any reasonable young woman to be annoyed by his quizzing, she did not intend to be caught in any more mistakes. This uncertainty on her part, and the Squire’s impression that she, of course, knew who he was, might have led to an embarrassment had not everything been nicely set in order by Orville. He had been fed to a state of perfect comfort by his grandmother, who had further added to his peace of mind by not ordering him at once to his delayed ablutions.

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“I think,” he had said to her, “as I won’t have tea with you I needn’t wash my face and hands until just before dinner. Don’t you think so?”

Grandmother thought so, and the young man strolled out to the veranda to see how his traveling companion was getting along. He arrived just at the moment when Jack, quietly enjoying the result of his nonsense, wouldn’t explain anything; when Miss Bolton wouldn’t ask for any explanation, and when the Squire, not knowing all the nonsense Jack had talked, did not know what had to be explained.

However ignorant of American geography Orville’s English governess may have been—and she was, in truth, responsible for his impression that Buffalo was on the Penobscot River near the Mississippi—she thoroughly taught him social ceremonies. Orville’s mother had said to his father: “You may select his teachers in boxing and fencing, but I must see that he has a teacher who will drill him in manners. Most little boys are little savages.”

Orville saw at a glance that there was a hitch

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in the veranda situation, so he advanced to his amiable traveling companion, saying:

"Miss Bolton, I am sorry I was not here to introduce you, but I had family affairs to discuss with my grandmother. This is my grandfather, and this" (turning to Jack) "is my cousin."

"You are just in time, Orville," said the Squire, when he had acknowledged the introduction, "for I suspect that Master Jack was trying to pass himself off as the old gentleman who had written to Miss Bolton about the district school."

"Oh, not at all, Miss Bolton," explained Orrey with his grand manner. "My Cousin Jack is only a college graduate, but my grandfather is a Squire."

This speech set the others laughing, but Orrey ignored them, adding: "I think tea is served; and, if you please, we'll all go in, for I guess I'll have some—if there are cakes—for it will be some time before dinner."

CHAPTER III

A QUEER QUARREL

EARLY the next morning, before anyone else but Mrs. Hulburt and the maids were astir in the house, Orville stood on the front veranda watching the red sun draw clear from the mountains. His legs were spread apart, his hands in his pockets, and his little skull cap, of the style called "grape skin," was perched far on the back of his head. His knickerbockers and jacket were of soft white flannel, his collar of starched linen, with a falling tie of scarlet fastened with a pin which represented a pair of fencing foils, his stockings were gleaming tan color, and his low shoes were burnished and buckled. He did not know that there was anything in his dress unusual for the place—that it was soon to involve him in a controversy verging on war—and was con-

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scious chiefly that porridge and milk was a comforting breakfast; that the warmth of the sun was not disagreeable, though it was not yet September; that he liked to draw deep breaths, and that the prospect was fair. He wondered where he could find a boy to play with who could answer a few of the thousand questions he wanted to ask.

There strolled around the corner of the house a black and tan hound, with long, drooping ears and the wisest, clearest, deep-brown eyes dog ever had, and who, upon seeing the young man, said as plainly as if he had uttered the words: "Hello! Whom have we here? An odd-looking boy, to be sure, but an honest one. I'll introduce myself. I may be of service to him." Thereupon Towser sedately ascended to the veranda and assured himself that he approved of Orville's personal odor—your letter of credit or discredit to any dog worth knowing—and then placed a friendly paw in the hand Orville held out to him.

"Hello, old chap!" the boy said, in answer to this hospitable greeting. He patted Towser's head, pulled his silken ears, and the dog rose

A QUEER QUARREL

on his hind legs and placed two large paws on his new friend's shoulders. The introduction was complete and satisfactory.

Then Towser strolled down the steps, turning his head with inviting eyes, and Orville followed, as he knew he was being asked to. Towser showed the way around past the modern brick part of the house, built when Orville's father was a boy, past the older, rough-stone portion, and then the original log house built by the first Hulburt to settle in that country, before the War of the Revolution; on through the kitchen garden, on past the mighty barn where two or three men under Scudder were finishing the morning chores, and through a pasture to the edge of a slope bounded by a pine-root fence. Here Towser put his fore paws on the top of a root and looked off to the west, turning inquiring eyes on the boy now and then which plainly said:

"Well, what do you think of this? *We* consider it one of our best views."

The country sloped away gradually to the valley below, with here and there hills of first growth pine, hay fields where the brown mows

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were being baled as the steam baler moved slowly from mow to mow, fields still waving with barley and oats, pastures where cattle, sheep, and pigs fed; and almost as far as Orville could distinguish objects he saw the great model farm of his grandfather, the college-bred man who had come back to the lands of his fathers, to extend them, to hasten the end of the abandoned farm period. All these Orville knew were some day to be his, and for the first time he began to understand why his grandfather had insisted that the city-bred boy should visit the Farm.

Towser may have had other views to show, but a man changing some sheep from one pasture to another whistled for him, and Towser went to his duty. No collie he, but he understood the foolishness of sheep nature as well as any dog named Shep, and he was soon correcting the notion of the flock that they really ought to go every possible way but the right way.

Orville saw many things he meant to know all about as soon as possible. There was the winding Beaver Creek, seen here and there

A QUEER QUARREL

tumbling and gliding on its way to the lake; there was one of those fascinating hills like some mighty cave animal sitting on its haunches and looking off to the west. He was glad there was one of those on the farm, for its gradual slope on the east made an easy ascent, while its abrupt western face suggested dangerous, and therefore delightful, climbs. He had heard of the Pond, and looked about until he located it. Then he strolled in that direction.

He came unexpectedly upon the upper end of the Pond as he cleared a little rise of pasture land. But more fascinating than the gleaming sheet of water, stretching away to a swamp at its lower end, was the figure of a boy just below him. Orville changed his position to get a side view, because from directly above he could see only an enormous straw hat and a pair of outstretched hands holding a fishing pole. His new view point brought him nearer, and he saw that the boy, who was about his age, was intensely interested in his sport. Presently he drew a black, big-headed, wedge-shaped creature out of the water, unhooked it, threaded it by passing a little stick through its gills for-

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ward and out of its mouth, and thus strung it with a mess of others in the water—lively, though captive. Orville had never before seen such a fish, and never in his life an occupation so unspeakably interesting.

The fisher boy, besides the overshadowing hat, wore a calico waist picturesquely opened at the throat and sketchily fastened to a pair of knee breeches. His bare legs were tanned a deep brown, and feet and ankles were stockinged with an even plaster of mud which made Orville hate his own polished shoes, and his toes to tingle with a desire to be clothed only in mud.

Here was a fellow to be cultivated. Orville drew nearer until his steps caught the attention of the fisher, who gazed on Orville in open-mouthed wonder, which passed from a hope that the sight was unreal into a sorrowful knowledge that it was real. Then the fisher turned away and blushed with mortification. He was thoroughly ashamed that any mortal, especially a boy, should be made to dress in such shameful—shameless—clothes. His misery was so acute, his pity so deep, that for a time he could

A QUEER QUARREL

not answer when Orville asked cheerfully: "What are you fishing for, old chap?"

When Lensie Severance—for such was the fisher's name—could control his emotion, he said slowly:

"Bulls."

Orville had little knowledge of fish beyond that they were usually a course at dinner, but he had a general knowledge of things which made him doubt this statement. He firmly believed that bulls were not commonly caught by hook and line, and he was convinced that they seldom lived under water; still he had seen the clown at the Hippodrome fish a bull pup out of the tank, so he did not commit himself without further question. "What kind of bulls?" he asked.

"Pouts," was the reply, delivered with a look of suspicion.

Orville, not receiving any useful knowledge from this, changed his form of approach, for he was determined to know this delightful sportsman. "It must be good fun," he said, coming close to Lensie, and peering at the bunch of fish wiggling at the end of the string.

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Lensie glanced at the questioner with growing indignation, for he began to think he was being made fun of. But he did not reply.

"I should awfully like to try it, if you don't mind," Orville went on, almost unable to keep his hands off the fishing pole. "I'll give you a nickel for a try," he concluded, producing a purse which held the coin he mentioned and no other.

Lensie was redder than ever, but no longer from mortification. He was angry: the outlandish stranger was making fun of him. He drew out the line, laid the pole aside, stood up, advanced his face with threatening contortions, and growled:

"You're a dude!"

"No, I'm not," said Orville, surprised but not giving ground, though Lensie was now pressing against him.

"You *are* a dude," repeated Lensie, scowling more darkly.

"Why am I a dude?" asked the other.

"Because," replied Lensie after a thoughtful pause, "because you wear those foolish things."

A QUEER QUARREL

“What foolish things?” demanded the puzzled Orville.

“Oh, you know well enough,” Lensie replied, wagging his head.

“If I knew I wouldn’t ask you,” said Orville.

Lensie after a while specified: “That cap—and jacket—and pants—and shoes. They’re foolish.”

“Are they, though?” said Orville. “What should I wear instead?”

“Nothing!” Lensie asserted emphatically.

Orville was usually good-natured, and in this case was especially eager to please, for the other boy’s dress and occupation had delighted him.

“See here, kid,” he said, after thinking over the situation, “you seem to have a horrid grouch on, but I don’t know what all the row’s about. If you’ll just stop that silly gab about me being a dude and let me fish with your line——”

To his astonishment Orville was interrupted by the other crying passionately:

“I can lick you!”

Orville was not frightened but his amaze-

BEAVER CREEK FARM

ment increased. He couldn't in the least understand the other's state of mind, and the other couldn't in the least explain himself. The offense of Orville's dress, and certain expressions Orville used in talking, which were foreign to Lensie and therefore deemed insulting, had overcome his first pity and now rankled so that only primitive emotion possessed him.

"I can lick you!" he again shouted fiercely.

Orville could only stare, bewildered, until something made the situation funny to him, and then he laughed.

"Well, old chap," he said, "I don't believe you can lick me, for you are holding the backs of your hands up. You couldn't give any kind of a wallop that way. Clench your fists squarely, and hold the backs down. That's right," he added, as Lensie obeyed and instinctively felt the greater power a blow would have delivered that way. "Now," continued Orville, "you swing or lead at me with either hand, and I'll tell whether or not you can lick me."

Lensie, madder than ever at this patronizing tone, gathered himself for a mighty blow and swung. He swung so hard that he wheeled



Blindly, his arms going like a windmill.

A QUEER QUARREL

completely round, and, having unconsciously shut his eyes, was surprised when he opened them to find that Orville had nimbly side-stepped, and was pleasantly smiling at him.

"I could have knocked your head off while you were swinging at me," Orville commented good-naturedly.

This speech, and the manner of delivering it, sent Lensie into a rage of tears. He sprang at Orville blindly, his arms going like a windmill, but to his surprise and greater anger none of his blows landed, and when he chanced to open his eyes he found Orville alert, side-stepping or dodging, but never holding his hands in a defensive position. At the end of one of his blind rushes Lensie felt himself checked by a strong grip on his shoulder, and found that he and Orville were held apart by Jack Hulburt, and that a young lady he did not know was standing near by, looking greatly distressed.

"What the deuce are you kids up to?" demanded Jack, shaking them.

"Just fooling," said Orville.

"We weren't fooling, we were fighting!" as-

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serted Lensie hotly. "And I could lick him if he'd only stand still."

"Nonsense!" said Jack, trying not to laugh at Lensie's reproach to the other boy. "Orville has been taught to box just as you have been taught to fish, and you'd better be exchanging knowledge than exchanging blows. What's the trouble, anyway, Orrey?"

"Why, he says that I'm a dude, and that I talk foolish. That's rot!"

This time Jack did not conceal a smile. "Well, Len, old fellow," he said, "my young kinsman has had his language corrupted, that's a fact; but as it isn't his fault, but his governess's, I say we should not be too hard on him. As for Len, here," he continued, turning to Orville, "he's one of the best fellows I know. Len and I are great chums, and I want you to like him."

CHAPTER IV

THE BOYS FIND A CAVE

THIS time the peacemaker was successful, for when Len heard such good account of the stranger, and that he was a kinsman of his friend Jack, he stared at Orville with lessening wrath, finally smiled shyly and held out an open hand, saying: "Oh, if I'd known he was one of the Squire's folks, and the boy you told me about, I wouldn't have minded his foolishness. But I thought he was a stranger—and you have to look out for *them*."

Orville, still perplexed as to the precise nature of his offending, took the proffered hand of peace, and soon enjoyed the ecstasy of landing a "bull," and of getting his hands pricked and stung in a dozen places before he mastered the mystery of grasping the horny, squirming, slippery thing so as to release it from the hook without self-injury.

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This unfavorable first encounter was followed by a close friendship, for when Len understood that Orrey did not use his outlandish language for the purpose of offending, and that his clothes were a matter in which he was not at all concerned, and Orrey learned that the other knew an endless number of the most fascinating things about the woods and fields and water which he was glad to impart, there was peace and mutual admiration.

It was only the next day that painful proof of this admiration—the flattery of imitation—was furnished on both sides. Early the next morning Orrey appeared on the veranda, his jacket discarded, and, most noticeable change, in bare feet. He was delighted, as he walked boldly across the smooth flooring, with the feeling of coolness and freedom about his feet. No more shoes for him! When he reached the path he began to walk gingerly, for the gravel ground into his unhardened soles in a way most painful. But he pluckily continued on his way, finding the grass at the sides of the path easier walking. Still, there were now and then twigs or stones which made him wince as he came

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down on them with his full weight, and taught him to be careful about placing his feet. With cautious steps he made his way slowly to the big pasture you cross just before the Pond is reached, and there he looked for easy going, remembering how smooth and tempting it seemed the day before. But all going is not smooth which looks so. There were hard lumps of earth, and, worst of all, thistles and briers, low-growing, and tramped out of sight by the stock, but which have a vicious prominence when a fellow attempts to walk over them unshod. Little by little the bruises, cuts, and stings made walking almost impossible, and he would have given up had not his pride been involved in his plan to show Len that he, too, could go barefoot. Painfully he reached the edge of the Pond just as Len approached, limping. He wore shoes: new, hard, unyielding Sunday shoes. Each discovered what the other had done at the same time, and grinned responsively.

“I’m done for,” said Orrey, turning up one foot and then the other, and finding them scarred with pink and blue bruises, sharp cuts

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and punctures which bled. Len sat down and pulled off his shoes with a sigh.

"I only wore them," he explained, "because I thought you'd wear yours. They've nearly ground my feet off."

"I went barefoot," Orrey confessed, "because you looked so comfy that way. But I'll never get back home. Never!"

"We've got to mud 'em," said Len. "That's the way to take out the stings." In his bare feet he went to a spring and returned with a double handful of soft mud, with which they daubed their feet. This had the effect of easing the throbbing hurts, and then they dangled their feet in the water until comparative cures resulted. Then Orrey put on Len's shoes and Len went barefoot, and, though both limped, they were able to make a promised excursion to the west side of the hill, which rose so abruptly there and so gently on the east.

Len told Orrey that a few days before he came a great wind had blown down some trees below the bluff of that hill. This would make it a fine place to play Indians; and it was to examine the battle ground that they planned

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the excursion. The conditions were found to be even better than Len had promised; the fallen trees were second growths, but old and big enough to make formidable defenses for the American army against the British, and just the thing for an attacking party of Indians to crawl through and attempt to massacre a farmer's family on the other side of the wind-fall.

"But we two can't play armies, Indians, and farmers all alone," said Orrey.

"No," answered Len. "We'll play Americans and Indians, and a couple of girls—the Twins, you know—who will be here to-morrow, will play British and farmers."

Further explanation by Len showed Orrey that his grandfather had selected Len and the Twins as his companions because they were neighbors, and otherwise proper persons to initiate Orrey into the mysteries of farm-life play. It appeared that Len was fishing for bulls on the morning before while awaiting a proper hour to go to the house and call for Orrey, but had no suspicion that the strange-looking boy he had encountered could be an

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offshoot of so sensible a family as that of Beaver Creek Farm. Talking over these matters, and arriving at good understanding of their present plans and future prospects, the boys had slowly made their way to the wind-fall.

It was too enticing a battle ground not to be tested at once; so Len played that he was one of Burgoyne's Indians and Orrey one of Schuyler's scouts, and they hunted each other through the tangle of fallen trees. Once, when Orrey was in hot pursuit of the crafty redskin, with the delightful promise that he could kill and scalp him if he overtook him, Orrey suddenly lost the trail. Len had been emitting horrid war cries, to be realistic and give Orrey a clew to the pursuit. These cries abruptly ceased in a smothered yell; and thinking—at least hoping—that the red fiend had met a bear, or some patriotic beast which would hold him until the pursuer could overtake and dispatch him to the Happy Hunting Ground, Orrey hastened on. It should be said, rather, that he tried to hasten, for traveling through the fallen trees was a hard job, and even the reduced

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amount of clothing the scout wore was in rags, and his legs scratched into an appearance of pink lace.

Peer and scramble, call and shout as he would, he heard nothing, saw nothing of the Indian for some time. But at last, emerging on the far side of the windfall, at the foot of the steep front of the hill, he heard muffled grunts which indicated that the foe—or something or somebody—was near at hand. After some time he traced the sounds as coming from a hole left by the upturned roots of a fallen tree, much like other holes he had passed. Bending over its edge, Orrey saw that this was deeper than others, and had a small opening leading into the base of the cliff.

“Surrender!” he cried. “Come out and be scalped, faithless foe of your best friend!”

“I can’t surrender until I get the sand out of my mouth, can I?” was the surprising reply which issued vaguely from the hole. “Get a stick and make a bigger opening for me,” was the next extraordinary request.

Orrey began to have a notion of what had befallen his playmate. Exactly what it was is

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this: the redskin, finding that the scout was gaining on him, jumped into a root hole, intending to hide, but, to his amazement, instead of finding firm ground at the bottom, continued to slide down a steep way—where, he did not know. With him slid a quantity of loose earth and rubbish which almost choked up the very opening which had received him.

Orrey soon had the opening cleared, jumped down into the hole, crawled through the opening, and joined his companion. Len grabbed his hand as soon as he felt him near, and exclaimed:

“It’s a cave!”

That, in fact, it was; a cave which a fallen tree had disclosed; one which had not always been concealed from the inhabitants of Beaver Creek Farm, and which had an interesting history connected with the early days of danger of a century and a third ago.

But that story is deserving of a separate chapter for its telling.

CHAPTER V

REAL WAR

TWO very dirty, very ragged and bruised boys limping up to the house was the sight which caused Mrs. Hulburt to exclaim: "In the name of mercy, what have those children been doing?"

Jack and Miss Bolton were on the veranda with her, and, looking at the boys, Jack said: "They've had their fight, after all."

The boys, breathless and excited, told their story, and at its end Jack went to find Scudder and organize an expedition, with lanterns, rope, and ladder, to explore the cave, while Mrs. Hulburt took the sore but happy discoverers into the house for scrubbing and repairs, which unpleasant operation was to be rewarded by something to eat.

Even to be washed, arnicaed, and court-

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plastered can be endured when the victim is promised one of Mrs. Hulburt's meals as a consolation. The good qualities of that lady are too numerous to mention, but I cannot refrain from saying something about what I consider one of her best. She turned a deaf ear to all this talk we hear so much of these days about our eating too much.

"Too much what?" she would ask. "Too many silly sauces made by pretenders in the kitchen, perhaps; too many mixy messes introduced by foreign rogues who, as like as not, are in a conspiracy to kill off the American race.

"But nobody, and especially no child, ever ate too much if his diet were confined to the simple cooking of the farm kitchen. Good, honest meat, vegetables, and bread should be the foundation of all eating, but the more appetizing goodies of the cupboard should be taken liberally. No fancy pastries, but simple pies of black or blue berries (fresh or preserved), of pumpkin, of mince, peach, or apple. Cakes should be avoided unless they are of home-made fruit varieties, or jelly, and such staples as pound, angel, and chocolate. Aside from these

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simple articles the diet should be restricted to ginger cookies, or gingerbread, doughnuts, maple sugar (and syrup, of course, for the morning griddle cakes), and the honest preserves of the farm—quince, berries, and apple (the latter in the form of butter), and such jams and marmalades as every respectable housewife must have in sufficient quantity.”

But while she held firmly to these restrictions as to what may be eaten, Mrs. Hulburt was liberal as to quantity; holding that if the diet were thus limited in scope, no one need be afraid to eat all that he wanted to, and as often as occasion offered.

It was while Orrey and Len were doing their best not to seem opposed to Mrs. Hulburt's theory about food that the Squire returned and heard the story of the cave. His wife had not been much impressed with the importance of the discovery, thinking more of the boys' comfort, perhaps; but the Squire was as nearly excited about it as it was possible for him to be about anything. He did not tell what so much interested him about the story until Miss Bolton and Jack came back from

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their expedition, and Jack triumphantly displayed, as trophy of their search, a large metal platter of graceful shape, but black with age and dirt. This the Squire took eagerly, and rubbed until some faint lines of design appeared. Then he looked at his puzzled wife and asked:

“Dorothy Hulburt, what piece of my great-grandmother’s set of pewter is missing?”

“A game platter, decorated with wild turkeys and other American birds,” she responded with a promptness which showed intimate knowledge of the family record of the set.

“And here’s the platter!” declared the Squire. “It explains the story we have never been able to understand—the old diary story of the flight to the cave.”

The Squire told the story that evening after consulting old diaries and other records with which he patched the tale together while his wife cleaned the precious platter, disclosing the design engraved upon it which an old inventory described.

“In the year 1772,” began the Squire when he had arranged some books and papers on a

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table by his side, " there was a Gilbert Hulburt who came into this country by the way of the Connecticut River and other waters to Lake Champlain. Then he came to this spot, to take possession of a tract of land he had bought on which to establish a home, and where he and his wife, their young son, and his brother Horace were soon living happily in the log house which still makes part of the building we are now in.

" When the time came for Americans to decide whether they would stand with the Patriots or Royalists—that is, with those who wanted the Colonies to separate from Great Britain or remain under the government of the King—Gilbert was for the American cause; but Horace held back because he was engaged to marry a young lady in a neighboring Royalist family. But soon the British general, Burgoyne, came down through Lake Champlain from Canada with an army of British, Canadians, Hessians, and four hundred savage and blood-thirsty Indians, to conquer the Americans of this part of the country, and thus help General Howe destroy the army under General

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Washington. General Burgoyne issued a proclamation in which he announced to the settlers about here that ‘the messengers of justice and wrath await them in the field; and devastation and famine and every concomitant horror will bar the way to their return’ if they were not loyal to King George.”

The Squire had taken up a book to read the exact language of Burgoyne’s infamous threat, and when he laid the book down he did not resume the story until after quite a pause.

“Now it is a fact,” said the Squire when he did resume, “a fact which greatly surprised Burgoyne, that his threat to let loose savage Indians on the families and homes of those who opposed him, instead of frightening the settlers into remaining at home, or joining him, as he expected many would, sent into the field against him many who had hoped to remain and protect their women and children. First of our household Horace, the brother, went with some neighbors to the relief of American troops besieged by the enemy—including Indians—at a place some distance from here, called Fort Schuyler. Horace and his friends joined the

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relief force which marched under General Nicholas Herkimer to Fort Schuyler; but Horace fell, tomahawked by Indians, in the swamp of Oriskany, where the rescuing party was ambushed. The battle was fought while torrents of rain fell from black and thundering clouds, and victory was on our side.

“It was not this news which sent Gilbert next into the ranks of the fighting Patriots—for he did not know of the death of his brother until much later—but news of another horror which fired the Green Mountains and sent men from many an unprotected and lonely home to help drive the invader and his savage aids from the land. Jenny McCrea, a beautiful young white girl, had been captured by one of Burgoyne’s allies, an Indian known as the Wyandot Panther, and her scalp, the pitiful trophy of her massacre, had been displayed in the British camp.”

“I read that story,” said Orrey, who spoke when the Squire turned to the table for a book. “It said that the Wyandot had been sent to bring Jenny into the British camp, where her sweetheart was.”

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“The stupidest invention which ever crept into history,” responded the Squire. “It is true that a young man engaged to marry Jenny was in Burgoyne’s army, but he was an American who lived in these parts, and knowing what all our people knew about Indians, he would no more have sent the Wyandot Panther to escort his pretty sweetheart between the lines than your grandmother would give you a rattlesnake to play with. But there is absolute evidence that the Wyandot captured Jenny as spoils of war just as she and another woman were setting out from Fort Edward to go to Fort Miller, for greater safety from the Indian allies of the British. Burgoyne had offered the Indians a reward—‘the equivalent of a barrel of rum’—for each white prisoner brought in alive, and the reason the Wyandot brought in Jenny’s scalp only was that he was too closely pursued by some Americans to effect his escape burdened with a prisoner.

“When Gilbert Hulburt joined the army, he left his wife to the protection of their son, then grown to be a fine lad of fourteen. He could shoot straight, and could find a path through

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the forests as well as any Indian. The brave wife knew what her husband and his friends thought, which made them determined to go to the ranks. As a humble poet expresses it in this volume:

“They thought of all their country’s wrongs,
They thought of noble lives
Poured out in battle with the foes;—
They thought upon their wives,
Their children and their aged sires,
Their churches, firesides, God!
And these deep thoughts made hallowed ground
Each foot of soil they trod.

“Gilbert went to join his neighbor, John Stark, near Bennington, with other Green Mountain men of whom Burgoyne testily wrote to his government: ‘They are the most active and rebellious men of the continent, and hang like a gathering storm on my left.’ They were the men who charged the hill near Bennington, and defeated the Hessians Burgoyne sent to clear his left. Gilbert—an ancestor of yours, Orville—heard Stark tell his men that he would win with them that day or his wife would be a widow. Let me read you the way an old-

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fashioned verse maker tells that part of the story:

“The morning came—there stood the foe—
Stark eyed them as they stood;
Few words he spake—’twas not a time
For moralizing mood:

“‘See them, the enemy, my boys!—
Now, strong in valor’s might,
Beat them, or Betty Stark will sleep
In widowhood to-night.’

“If Gilbert’s wife expected to have the comfort of her gallant young son’s presence during the absence of her husband and brother, she was mistaken. Philo—that was the boy’s name—was away most of the days and some of the nights; for he, and other lads of his age, formed part of the storm which hung on Burgoyne’s left, and made it so difficult for the British to send forward much-needed supplies. But Philo and his young companions kept close watch for Indians, and whenever the savages were in the neighborhood the lads would gather the women and hurry them to a cave on the Hulburt farm. We know this by these letters and diaries of the period, which I have just

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now looked over; but for a century and a third the locality of the cave has been a mystery until Orrey and Len discovered it to-day.

“ There were many flights to the cave, and the women took provisions there, not alone for their own use in time of hiding from the murderers of Jenny McCrea, but for the lads, who would not always go to their homes because of the presence in the neighborhood of British recruiting officers, looking for the Royalists Burgoyne thought were to be found here.

“ Now the mystery is explained. When our good ancestor, Gilbert Hulburt, had helped Stark defeat the enemy at Bennington, he saw many Indians desert from the British ranks, and he knew that the redmen would be even more savage than before in their raids on the settlers; so he hastened home to take his family to a place of safety. It was not until ten years later that the family returned to the farm, and in the meantime a landslide down the steep side of the hill—a common occurrence—had blocked and hidden the mouth of the cave. Trees had grown there, probably of considerable size, before the return of the

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family, so all trace of the cave was lost. And there, all that time, lay hidden the pewter platter, carried with provisions in the troublesome days; while succeeding mistresses of the farm wondered why that one piece of the famous old set was missing."

CHAPTER VI

WASHINGTON'S ORDERLY: SCUDDER

WHY, grandpapa," said Orrey, big-eyed and excited, when the Squire had finished his story of the flight to the cave, "you talk about those things which happened ever and ever so long ago just as my dad talks about the—oh! about the stock market and football games."

The Squire smiled as he answered: "Yes, son"—he called Orrey "son"—we do feel an interest in those events which surprises many Americans. Perhaps we have fewer things in our lives to take up our interest, and possibly we are a little better Americans than some others. Why, when I am in New York I hear people talk as if we had no history to be proud of; I meet men who seem anxious to forget that we ever were at war with England, more espe-

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cially to forget that we ever triumphed over that country in battle. I meet men whose knowledge of American history—at least their interest in it—goes no further back than the last election of a president. We hear foreigners pity us because we have no historical background in our country's life; no romance, no patriotic deeds to make us proud to be Americans. You did not come to the old farm any too soon, son. I want you to be the kind of American who is not only proud of his country's glorious history and achievements, but knows why he is proud."

"The fact is," said Jack, speaking to Miss Bolton, "my uncle is a hard and unforgiving man. I beg of you, as you love a quiet life, never allow him to express to you his views on the fact that the English set fire to our national capitol against all rules of civilized warfare."

"Jack, don't talk nonsense," said Mrs. Hurlburt. But the Squire smiled indulgently at his nephew, who continued:

"My dear aunt, you must admit that my uncle cherishes a disesteem for the English which

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is as surprising as it is unmerited—and any Englishman can prove that I am right in saying so. What did he do when Orrey's father gave a letter of introduction to the Englishman who came up here last winter? Dreadful! The Englishman learned that the Squire had shot a fox, and reproved him, saying: 'Squire Hulburt, in England we call that *murder*!'

" 'So I've heard,' said my unabashed uncle, 'but I've never been able to see why it is more murderous to kill a fox with one shot, and for its fur, which we make practical use of, than it is to mangle it to death with a pack of hounds for a tail of which no use is made.'

" 'But it's not English!' cried the horrified Britisher. The next morning my uncle found that he had an engagement, which kept him away from his own fireside until the visitor departed, a couple of weeks later."

"Well," said the Squire, laughing at the way Jack told the story, "that particular Englishman heaped coals of fire on my head: he sent me the book he wrote on our country, in which, after calling me a murderer for shooting a fox, he bitterly complained that my poor wife gave

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him coffee, hot biscuits, ham, eggs, and buckwheat cakes with maple syrup for breakfast—‘slops and garbage,’ he called them—instead of tea, toast, grilled bone and marmalade which his soul longed for. But we must not speak of my sins—they are not even interesting. Come, Len, my boy, recite the piece you spoke at the last commencement.”

Thus unexpectedly appealed to, Len began literally to curl up, until his own legs were wound in a wonderful manner about the legs of the chair. “I don’t want to,” he said, fiery red, and glancing sideways at Miss Bolton as the special cause for his stage fright.

Mrs. Hulburt urged him. “Do recite it, Lensie,” she said. “You spoke it beautifully at the school, and I want Miss Bolton to know what a fine orator she will have to call on for the Christmas exercises.”

“I only remember the start,” said Len. “I’ll speak that, if you want me to.”

He was assured by Miss Bolton that any part of the piece would be welcome, and she was so jolly in her encouragement that he uncurled and began to swell—really to swell—until his

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chest measurement must have increased several inches. When he had swollen until his skin looked like the silk of a distended balloon, he slowly arose, pointed his chin well up in the air, and, gathering a mighty breath, spoke what follows at the top pitch of his voice, and as if it were one long word:

“ ‘In the annals of a century and a half, by successive deeds of daring, by bloody forays, by the romance of border warfare, by the conflict of fleets and armies, the waters and shores of Lake Champlain have been consecrated as the classic ground of America.’ ”

Everyone applauded the orator, and Len sat down, breathing hard, but happy in his success.

“ Good boy ! ” cried the Squire. “ I’ll have Scudder hitch up and drive you home instead of letting you walk.”

As the company broke up—Mrs. Hulburt to the household duties in which she delighted, Jack and Miss Bolton to discuss the wonders of the stars as seen from the veranda, Orrey to ride home with Len and return with Scudder—the Squire retired to his workroom, where

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he kept a few favorite books, and, taking down a volume of Lowell, he read the essay, "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners." And before any grown-up readers judge the Squire harshly for what he said during the evening I should like them, too, to read that wholly delightful, but now somewhat unfashionable, essay.

Driving back from Len's, Orrey said to his companion:

"Is Scudder your first or your last name?"

"Both," answered Scudder.

"It can't be!" exclaimed the boy.

"You'd think it couldn't be if you didn't know why it is. It's all because a forebear of mine was an orderly for General Washington. I'd tell you the story only I don't believe you'd care to hear it."

This was his invariable way of introducing his famous story, which he knew anyone would want to hear who had an inkling of the curious reason he was named Scudder Scudder.

"It happened like this," Scudder said, when Orrey had demanded the story: "I was the

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seventh child in our family, but the first boy. Every time a baby came to our home, father, who was a powerful pious man, had to do his level best not to say words for which he could find no excuse in his moral training. He was a man proud of his family history, and, as I've hinted to you, most proud of the forebear who was an orderly for General Washington. That man's name was Scudder, too, and father was mighty anxious to have a son to carry on the name and live in these parts where a man can boast of his American ancestors and have folks understand what he is talking about.

"But the stork came and came and came, and not a blessed baby did it bring who was certain to remain a Scudder after it was old enough to be married. Well, the first girl got married to a man named Brown, and moved out West, where there is more land and not so much fertilizing; another girl married a man named Smith, and they went out West, too, and the third girl was the belle of the township.

"Father began to wrestle in prayer to find out if his punishment was because of his family pride, but it didn't seem to figure out that

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way. The third girl married a man named Robinson, and *they* moved out West.

“ ‘There they are,’ my father would say, ‘Brown, Smith, and Robinson, scattered all over the face of the earth, and not a one of them giving me even a grandchild who would come in when it was hungry if it was called Scudder.’ But, just as my father was beginning to have doubts of the goodness of Providence, I came along.

“ It would have been all right about my first name if the pastor of our church, who had often reproved my father for his pride, hadn’t told him of a man named Schuyler Stark who changed his name to Stark Schuyler in order to get a patch of land alongside of his farm which the owner’s great-grandfather, a Royalist, had left in his will on condition that each owner should swear that it would never belong to any man named Stark.

“ Mother often told me that when father heard *that*, he was the most cast-down man east of the Hudson River, and brooded over it so that she feared for his appetite, which had always been tolerably good. All this time

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mother was waiting for father to tell what I was to be named, for she had my christening clothes ready, and the neighbors were getting curious about the delay.

“ One day father rushed into the house from the barn, shouting: ‘ Scudder Scudder!’

“ ‘ Mercy sakes alive! What is the matter with you?’ asked mother. ‘ The baby’s all right.’

“ ‘ I know he is,’ says father, dancing about in a ridiculous manner. ‘ He’s all right because he’s to be named Scudder Scudder. Then the villain can’t turn his name around so’s there won’t be a Scudder in the county.’

“ And, Orville, that’s the way it happened. All my life I’ve never known rightly whether folks were getting friendly with me or not; never could tell if the particular Scudder they called me was meant for my first name or my last. I believe that’s the reason I never married. But I’ve got the stockings, and I’ll get the Squire’s wife to show them to you some day. She’s got them done up in camphor for me.”

“ Stockings!” said Orrey, puzzled.

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“ The outward and visible sign, as the pastor says about something else, of our family greatness. Those stockings got into our family history this way: that Scudder I was telling you about was orderly many times for General Washington during a winter when our soldiers weren't having a picnic at Valley Forge. One day Scudder was in the General's quarters, and there sat Mrs. Washington knitting stockings as fast as ever she could for the officer who might need them most; and there sat the General receiving reports, giving orders, and saying things about the quartermaster and commissary generals which that forebear of mine never would repeat, though many men writing lives of Washington asked him to. Washington was not quite himself. Scudder saw that, and he knew why: the General had lost a pocket-knife, and had written to the Quartermaster's Department for a new one, but it never came. Everyone knows that when you have to do hard thinking about a hard problem, nothing helps the flow of thought so much as whittling a stick. So Scudder, he got a clean piece of wood, opened his own knife, and quietly handed

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them both to the General, who took them in an absent-minded sort of way and was soon whittling like a whitehead—meaning no disrespect to the General. Well, Orrey, will you believe it?—before that stick was half whittled away the General had made up his mind just how he was to lick the British the next time. Fact!

“ Mrs. Washington had seen the whole business, and when Scudder stepped outside for an armful of firewood, she followed him, and she said: ‘ Orderly, you’ve got more sense than the whole Quartermaster’s Department. Here’s a pair of stockings I’ve just finished.’ ”

“ It stands to reason that Scudder was mightily pleased to get those stockings, seeing that at the time the stockings he wore were those he had on when he was born, and his shoes were not much to brag of—having no soles and very little uppers, which was a nuisance, for he was always tracking blood around the General’s quarters wherever he stepped, and having to wash it up before he left.

“ But he didn’t wear those stockings then; he’d sort of got used to going without such luxuries, and, besides, he didn’t want to make

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the other soldiers jealous of him. So he kept them for his wedding day; and every Scudder since has worn them only on those happy occasions. But it looks like they were only for ornamental purposes now—for, unless I can tell if a woman is calling me by my first name, how can I be sure that it would be good manners for me to pop the question? ” *

* Because I have here faithfully reported the story as told by Scudder I do not mean to vouch for it in every detail. But in support of Scudder I am happy to say that I have seen in the library of a charming gentleman, W. Gordon McCabe, one of Virginia's most distinguished scholars, the original letter Scudder spoke of, a letter written and signed by Washington, asking the Quartermaster to send him a pocketknife, describing the kind, to replace one he had lost.—E. W. T.

CHAPTER VII

THE TERRIBLE TOMAHAWK

LENSIE SEVERANCE was the son of a neighboring farmer, a descendant of an old family, who, unlike the Squire, had lived on the farm continuously since his birth. When the Squire, after his years at college and his travels, came back and married a playmate of his youth—who, too, had lived in cities—his neighbors predicted dire things for the farm, which he undertook to run under new-fashioned conditions. He varied the crops, drained the lowlands, used new implements for saving labor, bred back the vanishing Morgan strain of horses, the Merino sheep, and lectured his neighbors soundly on their wasteful and unscientific ways.

At first they laughed at him, but when he showed that his methods paid better than theirs

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they came to many of his ways of doing things. They couldn't quite approve when it came to giving up good ground to mere lawn and flowers, and if he had not been so thorough an American they would have thought he aped English customs in having dinner after tea instead of before it, as was their plan. But his small faults were overlooked for the value of his example and teaching in making the once nearly abandoned farms pay when worked with brains instead of growls, as he expressed it.

He had studied law, but did not practise it except that he advised his neighbors how to keep out of the law courts, and so naturally was called "Squire."

Another neighbor, Hiram Prendle, was the father of the Twins Len had promised to bring as a fighting force in future battle plays. They were twins, indeed, but so unlike as to seem to belong to different families. Sally Prendle was leader in all things active or dangerous, though she was a full inch the shorter, and Sister Catharine led in things scholastic. The latter was dark, and Sally as blonde as a sheaf of new-mown hay.

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Orrey, wearing a pair of moccasins owing to the sad state of his feet, was waiting for his guests as they arrived, Len bringing the girls up to the veranda with the introductory statement: "The Twins—Sally, Cathy—Orrey."

The host took off his cap and bowed with quite a manner, which caused the Twins, for almost the first time, to agree on something: each confided to the other that Orrey was a graceful and polite boy.

"How do you do, Orrey?" said Sally, and added in the same breath: "If you fen hitting me with the tomahawk I simply won't play. It doesn't hurt me any more to be blacked and blued than it does a boy."

As she made this surprising statement Orrey saw that she swung the most beautiful work of art—as he supposed it was—he had ever seen. It really was a pine tomahawk, made by an artist, indeed, who had sandpapered it until it looked as soft and smooth as a piece of velvet. Orrey was soon to learn how unlike velvet it was when one was whacked with it.

"The Twins," explained Len, "want to see the cave. They had a great, great, oh! ever so

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great-grandmother who hid there from the Indians."

"All right," said Orrey; "but I'd like one of those weapons Sally has if we are to play with them."

"That *weapon*," explained Len, "is a tomahawk, and Scudder's got heaps and heaps of them."

An immediate visit to Scudder proved that he had an armory of tomahawks, quite as artistic as Sally's, and knives, too, of Indian design, but made of pine, and on the edges of some Scudder had smeared red paint in splotches delightfully grewsome.

"Now," said Len, when the party was equipped for the warpath, "it's quite a long way to the cave, but it won't seem long if we play flight-and-pursuit on the way there."

"The rules of the game," spoke up Sally with much authority, "are that you must not stab or tomahawk above the waist line, for if you do you put out eyes, and grown folks don't like us to do that."

"My word, I should rather think not!" declared Orrey.

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The Twins eyed him suspiciously, and it took them, as it had Len, some time to understand that Orrey's manner of speech was not an affectation instead of a misfortune of which he was quite unconscious.

"I should think it would be jolly good fun, though," added Orrey, "even if one did not go in for putting out a chap's eyes."

There were signs that Sally was about to give Orrey a piece of her mind for using such language, but at a signal from Len to be patient with the city-bred unfortunate she only said:

"Well, then, I'll be Jenny McCrea, Len will be my captor, Wyandot Panther, Orrey will be the 'American troopers going to her rescue, and Cathy can be——"

"I won't be anyone who fights," said Cathy decidedly.

"Very well," assented Sally, "you can be the war correspondent."

"There weren't any," declared Cathy, who knew her history even if she would not act it.

"What difference does it make who we are?" asked Len. "We can all fight who want to,

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and that's the thing. Let Cathy be an English soldier, and we'll fen knifing or tomahawking her."

Assured of this, Cathy agreed to play, and the forces divided. Len and Sally were to be given a start, while the pursuers turned their backs and counted fifty.

Orrey counted with his eyes shut, savagely swinging his tomahawk the while, and thinking how he would let Len have it on the legs as soon as he was in the chase. When the count was over Orrey was for darting forward, but Cathy, naturally cautious and knowing more about such things, warned him:

"Better search the forest with an eagle eye for the lurking foe before venturing into his dangerous lair," she said.

It will be agreed that even if she were a noncombatant, Cathy was well up in the language of warfare. But this is not entirely a womanly trait; the same thing has been observed in some men.

"Not much!" declared Orrey. "Let's up and at 'em, guards!" and he sprang away from her restraining hand and rushed forward in

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the direction he supposed the foe had taken—the direction of the cave, of course, for that was the objective. But he had taken not more than a dozen steps when, *from behind*, flew a deadly tomahawk, which landed on his leg with such a cracking blow as to bring him to his knees with tears of pain.

“Run for your life, paleface!” shouted Cathy, who was already some paces in advance; but before he could run for his life, or anything else, Len and Sally were on him, bearing him down to the ground with a rain of knife thrusts by Len, while Sally triumphantly scalped him, uttering hideous war cries which made the operation all the more painful to the victim.

Orrey sat up, rubbing his wounds, and said disgustedly to Sally:

“You’re a nice Jenny McCrea, you are! You’ve killed me while I was trying to save you from this hated red serpent.”

“Do you think I was going to stay Jenny McCrea while you gave me such a chance for a scalping?” asked Sally indignantly. “Now we’ll try again. You and Cathy can be Mo-

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hawks and Tuscaroras, Len and I will be Hurons and Algonquins. I suppose even *you* know what that means."

"What *does* it mean?" asked Orrey, getting to his feet for this war council.

"It means we are deadly enemies," explained Sally. "Go, faithless Mohawk! The sun shall not set before the brave Algonquin hangs your scalp at her belt. *Hiro!*"

"What in ever is '*Hiro*'?"

"Well, what in ever *do* they teach you in the city? '*Hiro*' is, 'I have spoken.'"

The order of the campaign being reversed, Orrey and Cathy led off ahead of their pursuers. Orrey was now content to take a girl's advice, and getting a little into the woods they made a sharp turn to the right and hid behind trees. But when fifty had been counted, and Orrey peeked out to see where the foe were going, they were not in sight. "They are crawling through the grass to the edge of the woods," whispered Cathy. "There are brambles there, and Sally's dress will be a sight. Look out!"

This cry warned Orrey that he would dis-

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close their hiding-place if he were not more careful.

"Let me have your funny cap," she added, "and you steal off to another tree. Be sure you go on your stomach if you don't want to be tomahawked again."

She took the grape-skin cap, and, as Orrey crawled away in the manner she had commanded, smilingly inspected it, then fitted it over one hand, which she held out just in sight of the enemy. The trick worked: first the tomahawk of the Algonquin, then that of the Huron, whizzed past the target, the Huron's weapon grazing Cathy's hand. She uttered cries of lament, and the cruel foe dashed toward the tree, certain of again finding the untrained city Mohawk.

But Orrey had found a near-by hiding-place, and as the hostiles charged the tree, led on by the decoy, Orrey charged their rear in sudden fierce attack, overpowered them, and whacked them both vigorously. Sally would not cry for mercy, but in the *mêlée* Len whacked Cathy for her cap trick, and at the first blow Cathy shrieked aloud. This maddened the

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brave Algonquin, who flew to her sister's aid, fell upon her ally, Len, and a general mix-up followed, in which friend fought friend and foe defended foe until, weakened with slaughter and laughter, Orrey rolled over and over in delight.

"I say!" he exclaimed as he caught his breath, "this is the greatest sport I ever had."

"It's just as horrid as it can be!" cried Cathy. "It's not at all nice for girls; and I don't like to play with boys, anyway."

Sally announced that the great Algonquin had had revenge upon all her enemies, and was willing to call a truce.

"Unless," she added, sitting up with sudden eagerness, "you two boys want to make war against me alone. If you do, I'll be General Stark and you can be the Hessians, and I'll fight you single-handed. *Hiro!*"

Orrey declined this challenge on the ground of gallantry, but Len had a more practical reason.

"It's no use fighting Sally alone," he said. "She can hit as hard as a boy, and does; but a fellow can't hit her as hard as he hits an-

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other boy, so she'd whack us both black and blue while we were just trying to keep her from charging the hill. I know her!"

"I'm black and blue," said Sally proudly; and she rolled down a stocking to show a shin which proved her boast to be true. "Come on," she exclaimed after feasting her eyes on her honorable wounds, "let's race to the cave. We can all be American troops chasing Burgoyne at Saratoga."

Orrey supposed that with girls in the army the advance would be around the windfall, but Sally not only charged over and through the trees, but led the army in the scramble. That is, she led the boys, for Cathy decided she would be a detachment of scouts and go around the abatis.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HAUNTED TREE'S TREASURE

AT the cave, which they reached after wholly routing Burgoyne and celebrating their victory by singing "Yankee Doodle," they found Scudder's ladder and some candles, as Scudder said they would, and explored every inch of the floor. It was not a large cave—about the size of a cottage dining room and parlor combined—with nooks like cupboards, into which Sally penetrated with her candle, and was rewarded by finding another pewter dish, which she said she knew *must* belong to her mother. They also found dry and ragged remains of what had probably been baskets, in which they agreed that food and dishes were carried by the women who hid from real Indians so many, many years ago. The boys hunted carefully for some signs of the lads who made the cave their headquarters and

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issued forth to harass the enemy; but if evidence of their occupancy were left, they were now part of the crumbling heaps here and there discovered, but which could not be identified. Cathy, who was something of a poet, guessed that these were the dust of blankets in which the brave youngsters had rolled themselves up to sleep, and I'm inclined to believe that her guess was correct. She even extemporized some verses about the subject, which Orrey afterwards reduced to writing, sending a copy to his mother.

The verses were received with scorn by Sally, who was haunted by a secret fear that Cathy, by her poetic talents, showed signs of a tendency to consumption. This curious fear grew out of the fact that the only acknowledged poet Sally knew was a summer visitor to the neighborhood, who sometimes called upon her father, at which times the visitor drank much hard cider. She had asked him once if cider helped his poetry, and he replied that he took it rather for the pleasure of consumption. However much pleasure *he* might find in consumption, Sally was determined that Cathy should not

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become a poet and consumptive, so she vigorously combated her twin's verse-making habit.

"But it's more ladylike to make verses than to get whacked with a tomahawk," asserted Cathy in defense.

"Verses are more dangerous," declared Sally wisely. "We'll play anything you like so long as it isn't sickly, like poetry."

"Then let's make licorice-water wine," Cathy suggested.

Usually this would have been scouted as belonging to the verse-making sort of thing, but they were all thirsty as a result of battle, murder, and sudden deaths, and any kind of beverage had a pleasant sound. Orrey confessed that he did not know about licorice-water wine, and was well hooted for this additional evidence that city children are taught little that is of practical use in life. When the operation was explained to him, he asked who was to go to the village for licorice, and was assured that his grandmother would have it.

"Mrs. Hulburt always has anything anyone needs," declared Cathy.

As to licorice, this turned out to be true.

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The manufacture of the beverage was left to the girls, the boys' work being the solemn ceremony of burying the filled bottles. So, while the Twins were shaving the stick into thin pieces, melting it in hot water, bottling and corking it, the boys wandered down to where Jack and Miss Bolton had been playing tennis, on the grass court in front of the house. They were not playing when the boys joined them, but sitting in the shade of a big old oak tree. Neither were they talking much, yet seemed happy; a state of bliss which Orrey could not understand, for speech to him was ever a necessity of a good time. He remarked as much to Jack, who answered in surprise:

"Why, you don't expect people to talk under a haunted tree, do you?"

Orrey opened big eyes. "Haunted!" he exclaimed.

"You must be a particularly ignorant person," Jack answered, "not to know that this tree is haunted. Len knows it."

"You bet you I do!" Len responded. "You don't catch me here after dark! The ghost is never here in the daytime."

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Orrey demanded the story, but Jack said it was Mrs. Hulburt's own special story, and no one else was allowed to tell it in that family.

"It's just the place to bury licorice water," Len said. "It turns to wine quicker under a haunted tree; and, besides, other kids always steal it unless it is buried where they are afraid to go."

"That's the honest truth as ever was told," Jack said. "Take your shovels and dig the wine vault on the north side of the tree."

"Which is the north side?" asked Orrey, gazing vaguely at the heavens and earth.

"The side of the tree where the trunk is green, of course," Len explained.

The Twins appeared, wrapped in long aprons loaned by Mrs. Hulburt. They were suspiciously brown and sticky about their mouths, but had bottles honestly filled and securely corked. The boys started to dig while Jack made an incantation which he said was necessary to keep the beverage from spoiling. He held Miss Bolton's hand in one of his, Sally's in the other, and with Cathy between her sister and Miss Bolton they made a circle around the diggers while



“ ‘ Dig, Imps, dig ! ’ ”

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Jack chanted, in a series of deep bass moans and shrill, witchlike shrieks:

“She whose hand I hold in mine—
Dig, Imps, dig!—
Is sweeter far than licorice wine”—

“You are chanting nonsense!” interrupted Miss Bolton.

“You’ll break the spell, that’s what you’ll do,” complained Jack, and resumed his chant:

“The rose is red, the violet, too—
Dig, Imps, dig!—
And what I’ve said is news to you;
But I’ll be switched if it isn’t true;
If you love me as I love blue—
Dig, Imps!”——

“Gee!” yelled Len, dropping his shovel. “There’s something mighty queer down there, as sure as I’m a foot high.”

“Something queer everywhere,” said Jack. “But what is it, Master Grave Digger?”

Len was down on his knees by the side of Orrey, and both boys were digging with their fingers as excitedly as if they had found a pot of gold.

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Jack resumed his incantation chant:

“Swinzey, swanzay, swappity-hack,
A crow isn't white because it is black.
If you don't go away you can never come back—
Dig, Imps, dig!”

But Miss Bolton, who was watching the boys work, called to him:

“Do be quiet; the boys really have something.”

“And so have I—here!” exclaimed Jack, striking his bosom. But he knelt down by the diggers, and his manner suddenly became serious enough as he took one of the shovels, told the boys to stand aside, and presently uncovered the top of a metal box, which he soon lifted from its resting-place. It was about the size of a cigar box. The cover came off easily, for the hinges had rusted away, although the rest of the box was in good condition; even the raised ornamental figures on the cover could be traced when the earth was wiped away.

It was an intensely eager group which watched Jack as he freed the box from earth, and there was a cry of excitement when he

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took from it a little parcel wrapped in some preservative cloth, and disclosed a jeweled ring.

“By Jingo!” exclaimed Jack. “This is a find, sure enough! I guess we’ll let uncle and aunt do the rest of the unwrapping.”

As the party started for the house, the Twins so excited that they held each other’s hands tightly, the lunch bell sounded. But that lunch was never eaten; it was not until hours afterwards that any of the party left the Squire’s room, where all went with the romantic treasure. Mrs. Hulburt told, at last, what it all meant, but as it is now her very best story, I shall open a new chapter for her to tell it to us.

CHAPTER IX

DUELISTS AND SMUGGLERS

THERE was a family named Dunshee in this neighborhood before the war—as there is now,” began Mrs. Hurlburt, as she sat in a rocking chair near a window, that she might have a good light on the trinkets she held in her lap and examined from time to time, trinkets which had been taken from the box and cleaned. “But one branch of the Dunshee family was Royalist, and went back to England. The ancestors of the family now here were Patriots, and sent soldiers to the American army.”

She spoke as one who tells a tale of to-day, not of a century and a third ago.

“In the family of Resolved Dunshee, the Royalist branch,” resumed the story-teller, “there was a daughter named Prudence. Our

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family—Gilbert Hulburt's, that is—had known Resolved Dunshee's before either moved here from the Rhode Island Plantations, and Horace Hulburt, of whom the Squire told you yesterday, who was killed by the Indians in the ambuscade in Oriskany ravine, was engaged to marry Prudence Dunshee. But her father was all for the King, and said that no rebel could marry his daughter. Horace would not deny that he was a Patriot; but he did not go into the army at first, thinking he might serve his country in some degree by protecting our home, and yet, by not joining the army, keep his engagement with Prudence. When he heard of the siege of Colonel Peter Gansevoort at Fort Schuyler—Fort Stanwix, it is sometimes called—Horace rode over to the Dunshee farm and told Prudence that he must enlist. He could no longer stay away from the fighting while Saint Leger, with seventeen hundred men, many of them Indians, threatened Colonel Gansevoort's force of seven hundred. He asked Prudence if, even without her father's consent, she would marry him; but she said she would not if he joined the rebel army. Her

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brother was in the British army, and she said she never would marry a man who would take up arms against a member of her family.

“ Horace at last agreed to the terms offered by the girl he loved. It is not for us to judge him: he loved her dearly; he knew that he could be of use to his own and his neighbors’ homes by remaining here to organize the boys and old men into a guard to protect the women from Burgoyne’s Indian raiders. It was not cowardice nor fear of fighting which weighed with him. He had been taught the use of arms, like all gentlemen of that day; he was a notably skillful swordsman; and while he was by nature more of a student than a soldier, he was brave enough, as we shall see.

“ No; it was the promptings of his heart, and the knowledge that he could serve the cause at home which made him agree to what Prudence demanded.

“ Horace and Prudence had come to this understanding, and the young lovers had gone to tell Resolved Dunshee of their agreement, when a British officer, accompanied by a few soldiers, rode up and presented to Mr. Dunshee a letter

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from the brother of Prudence, asking entertainment for the officer, who was in these parts looking for recruits.

“ ‘And you’d make a good soldier for the King,’ said the officer when he was introduced to Horace.

“ ‘An hour ago I hoped to make a good soldier for the Army of the Congress,’ answered Horace. ‘I abandon that hope only for a greater one.’

“ ‘Oh! have we a rebel here?’ asked the officer. ‘My men would not object to earning the same reward the General gives our Indians for each white prisoner.’

“ ‘Your men are welcome to take me—if they can,’ answered Horace who, though a studious young man, and something of an artist, was as courageous as all of the Hulburts.

“ ‘I’ll not trouble my men to help me take the sword away from one traitor,’ said the officer, drawing his own sword. But Resolved Dunshee interfered, reminding the officer that Horace was his guest and entitled to his protection, even though he were a rebel.

“ ‘I thank you, sir,’ said Horace to Mr. Dun-

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shee. Then he turned to the officer and said: 'I have no second at hand, but if you are willing to act without one I shall ride slowly, and you can easily overtake me on the road.'

" 'By the Lord! you are no coward—neither am I!' exclaimed the officer. 'I'll do better than overtake you; I'll accompany you down the road until we have left our host's grounds.'

" An hour later Horace returned to the Dunshee home, leading a horse on which he supported the officer—wounded. Prudence was the nurse of that officer, and Horace, when he could, rode over to visit her, and take a book, or such, to the wounded man. But one day he came home with a sad, white face and hopeless eyes. Then it was he rode away to join the force for the relief of Fort Schuyler, and never came back. Prudence had fallen in love with the British officer; and when Burgoyne was defeated the officer returned to Quebec, and Prudence with him. They were married there.

" After the war that branch of the Dunshee family returned to England, and our family heard nothing from them until many years afterwards; not until Gilbert of this house was

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an old man. We know from his diary and from letters of his children what happened to make people hereabouts call the oak tree haunted. Gilbert Hulburt, when, as I have said, he was an old man, received a letter from Prudence, then in Montreal, asking if he would receive her. She said she wanted to visit the grave of Horace, and to return to Gilbert some presents Horace had given to her. She supposed they had been returned, for she had asked that they should be when she went away, but she had lately found them among her brother's effects—forgotten.

“Gilbert wrote to her that he could not forbid her to return, but that he would not see her. ‘Do not bring back to me that poor boy's gifts. You sent him to his death; bring him back—not his gifts,’ Gilbert Hulburt wrote to Prudence.

“Later, he knew that Prudence came here; knew that she had visited the grave of her lover, and suspected that she came at night to the oak where they used to meet when they were young, and there was no sorrow in their hearts—only love. Gilbert, indeed, saw Pru-

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dence there one night, or supposed that it was she, for he did not accost her. So did some neighbors see her, or see a heavily veiled figure of a bent old woman, and the story went around that the oak at the Hulburt farm was haunted. A story like that, in a country like this, is as fresh in the minds of the people to-day as when it was started.

“Now we know what she went to the old tryst for: to bury this little jewel casket. See her poor letter, the writing not yet quite faded, so well it was preserved in these cloths.”

Mrs. Hulburt stopped to read again the letter which had been found in the box with the ring, the little painted fan, the jeweled shoe buckles—gifts which Horace sent for to far countries for his sweetheart:

“I bury these here, where my heart has been buried so many sad years.

“PRUDENCE.”

That was the letter.

When his grandmother finished the story, Orrey looked at Miss Bolton and, seeing tears in her eyes, went to her side and took her hand, saying:

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“You’ll marry a patriot, won’t you, Miss Marion?”

“If I marry anyone,” she replied, smiling. “But I’m not thinking of marrying at all.”

“Weren’t you?” asked Orrey in surprise. “I fancied you were when the tears came into your eyes while grandmamma told the story.”

“That proves nothing except my sorrow for poor Prudence and her lover,” Miss Bolton said. “Tears were in Cathy’s eyes, too, but she can’t be thinking of marrying.”

“But I am!” declared Cathy unexpectedly. “When I marry I’m going to marry the man I love, so’s I won’t have to wander about haunting trees for the man I loved and didn’t marry. If Prudence had been a patriot I believe I should love her.”

“I think,” said the Squire, “the children deserve a treat as a reward for finding the buried treasure. As the evenings are getting cool enough for dancing, I move that we have a young and old folks’ party as soon as we can get ready.”

Here was a proposal which put thought of even the story of Prudence out of the young

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people's minds, and set them at work writing a list of things which would have to be ordered from the city. But the list was short, for there were all but boundless resources in Mrs. Hurlburt's kitchen, pantry, cellar, and preserve closet, to say nothing of the grand finds to be made in the attic in the way of materials for charades and games.

If I had my way, no boy or girl should be brought up except in a house with an attic. Orrey had never seen such a place, and his joy amounted to excitement when he and his companions began to rummage—with grand-mamma's consent and keys to make it easy.

Oh, the homely delights and mysteries of an old attic! Not the kind where careless housewives keep only rubbish which should have been thrown away long ago; not where accumulate from generation to generation the worthless, but the priceless, family heirlooms: old guns and swords—not the junk one buys in a curiosity shop, but the very arms carried by those who, too, once rummaged and delighted in that attic; old uniforms; old ball gowns smelling pungently clean from their camphor; old china

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and pewter; old diaries, where one may find materials for a shelf full of stories (such as this); old cooking-receipt books, in precise handwriting, with minute directions for the making of dishes which I really believe this generation could not eat and digest—unless reformed in the matter of out-of-door work and play. Those same books have, as supplementary reading, so to say, instructions as to the setting of the dining table for a ceremonial feast, from which one gathers that our ancestors did not feel sure of a meal until there were enough cold and hot dishes of meat, fish, and game at once on the board as would supply a week's menu in these dyspeptic days.

These books did not interest Orrey and Len so much as they did the Twins, but when the boys came upon an old account book, with the amounts of money entered in pounds, shillings, and pence, they began to find romance fit for boys, and men who ever were boys. They took one of these books over by a dormer window and sat down on the floor to decipher some of the stories.

There was shown how “carriage”—which, I

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think, meant freight charges—was paid for tobacco brought all the way from Virginia, mostly by inland waters; with entries of the cost of portage around waterfalls and rapids, of hire of Indians and their canoes, of guides—and think of needing *guides* to find a main traveled freight route! And—alas! that I should have to record it—there were entries in one book which showed that one old Hulburt was a free trader, indeed (this was even before Gilbert Hulburt's time), for he noted charges for the service of a lighter in Narragansett Bay for taking off from a ship from Holland certain packages of sugar, of wine, of tea, of silks and woolens, before the ship had entered at the customs house.

“Honestly,” said Len, when they had, with breathless interest, made out this delightful entry, “I'd almost rather be a smuggler than a soldier. Isn't it just bully!” So, with their heads touching in their eagerness to scan the old pages, they searched for more stories of the good old days when gentlemen would boast that the glass of wine they freely offered paid not a shilling from their pockets to the govern-

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ment of the King who would not grant them political representation.

No romance in the early life of this country! I do declare that access to any well-stored attic, which dates from only a generation before the Revolution, will provide anyone with romance enough—one who knows good material when he sees it.

When Orrey and Len discovered that *very* free trade entry they started the Twins on a search through some old chests for the silk gown which looked most like one enjoying the distinction of having paid no tax to the King's collector of customs. They found one which answered, they thought, but Mrs. Hulburt told them that it was more modern; being one, indeed, in which one of her own ancestors had been much admired at some grand balls the quality of New York gave to celebrate the inauguration of President Washington in the spring of 1789.

“And from all I could ever see or learn of that city,” said Mrs. Hulburt, “New York never would have celebrated the event unless it could have been made an occasion for social

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festivities. New York was not very patriotic during the War" (*the* War, with her, meant the War of the Revolution), "and the Squire says it is still a Tory town. But Mrs. Washington herself was an aristocrat, and encouraged the social life."

That gown was again worn at the party given in the children's honor—but this is taking us ahead of our story.

CHAPTER X

A THREATENING CLOUD

ORREY now found that he spent some part of each day in the company of Scudder, going about the farm and stock buildings, learning much; but as he did not know that Scudder was instructing him at the Squire's orders—that is, did not know that he was taking lessons—he enjoyed the schooling. Scudder was a firm believer in the Squire's "new-fangled ideas," and explained them to Orrey, in his way, with interesting clearness.

"We're going in for Holsteins," he said, as Orrey walked sedately by his side through the vast dairy barn, where there was a concrete silo which held the crop from thirty acres of sown corn—silage, or ensilage, they call it. "We went in for Jerseys at first," he continued, "but when we took up hogs we changed to Holsteins. Why?"

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“ Why? ” echoed Orrey.

“ Because the Holsteins give more milk, though their milk does not give more cream. But when the cream has been taken out by the separator, there is more milk left for the hogs. Understand? If you get more hog from the same food fed to the cows, you have saved just as much grain as you'd have had to feed the hogs if you didn't have that extra milk to feed them. Understand? ”

Orville thought he understood. When his attention flagged Scudder would end his lesson, and Orrey would find that about that time Len and the Twins had arrived, or that it was time for him to go and meet them. One day, after his hour with Scudder, Orrey strolled back by the Creek (where he hoped some day to see a beaver, as Len said he *believed* he once had), and came upon Miss Bolton sitting under a great silver poplar. He was very fond of the pretty young lady who was always so ready to devise indoor games for the children when rain kept them in the house, and he halted in pained surprise to see that she was softly crying. Then he ran forward, exclaiming: “ Oh,

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Miss Bolton, what has happened? If anyone has been mean to you, just tell me who it is and I'll—I'll *beat* him!"

She rose quickly, crumpling a letter which had fallen into her lap. "No, Orville," she said, "it is nothing; and you will not say that you saw me crying."

She took his hand and walked with him a little way before she spoke again. "If you have nothing to do before lunch, could you get the pony cart and drive me to the city? I must meet the train, and would like you to drive me."

Beaver Creek was a "city" because its charter said it was; otherwise it was a very old village of two thousand inhabitants, "all of whom," Jack said, "had lived there two thousand years." It had a graded school, where not only the city children went, but the children of the near-by districts which did not maintain their district schools. It was because the Squire did not approve of his neighborhood children going into the city for their schooling that he decided that his district school should be revived. It was this matter which started

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his correspondence with the president of a woman's college, and brought about the invitation to Miss Bolton. The Squire learned from the college president much which engaged his and Mrs. Hulburt's interest and sympathy for Miss Bolton. She was an orphan, and the legal ward of a stepfather who was not represented in pleasing colors in the president's letters. In fact, it was her stepfather's mismanagement of her little fortune which had made Miss Bolton eager to begin wage earning.

Orrey knew nothing of this; but if he had, he could not have taken a quicker or more violent dislike to the man who was already at the station when Orrey and Miss Bolton arrived, and who came up to the pony cart to speak to her. He was short, red, and pompous. He stared back at Orrey in a way to satisfy the boy that his opinion of the man had been plainly expressed, and then motioned Miss Bolton to leave the cart.

They walked up and down the station platform, usually out of Orrey's sight, but his occasional glimpses of her confirmed his first bad

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opinion of her stepfather—for such the pompous little man was. Orrey saw that she was crying again, and that the man was talking angrily; then the boy handled the horsewhip as if with the purpose of using it on the man if the interview or Miss Bolton's tears did not soon stop.

When the interview did end, just as Orrey had determined to make a demonstration with the whip, the man drove off to the inn and Orrey started home, with Miss Bolton, sad and silent, at his side. At last she said to him:

“I should like it if you would not speak to anyone at the Farm about this. The man is my stepfather, and he is to call on the Squire. But I would rather that no one else—young Mr. Hulburt—should know about this—yet.”

It was two days later that Mr. Marvin, Miss Bolton's stepfather, called at the Farm. “I find that my daughter—” began the caller.

“Your stepdaughter,” corrected the Squire.

“My stepdaughter, if you please,” said Mr. Marvin, turning more than usually red. “I find her determined in this foolish notion of

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earning her own living. I believe she is encouraged in this by you, and I come to point out why you should help end such nonsense."

"Well?" said the Squire.

"Well," continued the man, "Miss Bolton, besides being my *stepdaughter*, is also my ward as to the affairs of the little property left to her by her mother, and will continue to be such until she is twenty-five years old—some three or four years."

"Well?" repeated the Squire.

"It is my duty to consider her welfare in all things, and an important matter in any young woman's life is the question of her marriage."

"Doubtless," said the Squire.

"In that respect," the other went on, "it is proper that Marion should accept the home I offer her. She should not waste her youth exiled in this forsaken land, where, of course, she cannot meet any man of her social position—cannot expect to find a husband, in short."

"She is of legal age," said Squire Hulburt, "and if she prefers to waste her life—I do

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not agree that she would be doing so—in earning her independence, do you expect me to help you make her change her mind? ”

“ As a sensible man of the world, yes. That is precisely what I think you should do.”

“ Mr. Marvin,” said the Squire, “ I asked Miss Bolton to visit us here only after making inquiries concerning her through a gentleman in whose judgment I have entire confidence. I wanted a young woman equipped for the simple duties of the district school, and who, also, would be an agreeable companion for Mrs. Hulburt: one we should like to make our guest, not our boarder. Mrs. Hulburt has already become attached to the young lady, and as to her salary, it will be my pleasure to make it up to a proper sum beyond what the school pays her. In view of these facts, do you still think it is my duty to urge Miss Bolton to return to your home? ”

“ I certainly do,” replied the other. “ There is no question of the young lady having to earn her living, and at my home she will meet gentlemen among whom I can find her a desirable husband.”

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“ At *your* home? ” the Squire asked with a slight emphasis which made the other flush angrily.

“ Yes, sir, in *my* home. I hope you do not doubt my social standing.”

“ I have no doubts whatever in the matter,” replied the Squire. “ I would sacrifice much rather than interfere between a proper guardian and his ward; I am not one to meddle in such affairs until I am convinced that to do so is right. I suggest that we leave the matter in that state for the present. I may correspond with you later.”

The bow with which the Squire ended this speech showed that the interview also was at an end, and the caller drove away.

When Squire Hulburt received word that Mr. Marvin was to call on him, he sent Jack off to attend to some business for him; and Miss Bolton, at the Squire's suggestion, rode with Jack, so the young couple did not know of the visit. The Squire and his wife, to whom he gave a report of the interview, were glad that Jack and Marion had been absent; they looked so happy when they galloped back it would

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have been a pity to have clouded such sunshiny lives.

“Lunch, auntie! Lunch for a regiment, for here we are!” shouted Jack, as he helped Marion to dismount. “The man whose soul would not be filled with joy after such a ride—and in such company,” he added in a whisper to his companion, “would be fit for treason and a spoiled lunch.”

CHAPTER XI

THE PARTY

THE afternoon of the party fell on such an early September day as only the mountains know: clear, bright, warm and cool at the same time.

At almost the last minute Miss Bolton begged Mrs. Hulburt to let her help prepare the supper, but not appear before the guests. "I haven't a thing to wear," she said. "You must know that I had no idea I was coming to such a home as this. It isn't at all the kind of place the girls at college who had taught district schools told me it would be; and besides my wash frocks I have only some stout woolen gowns—not the kind of thing one should wear at so grand a party."

"But your gown is all prepared," Mrs. Hulburt said. "Haven't the children told you about it?"

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The children, more particularly the Twins, with the help of Mrs. Hulburt and Mrs. Prendle, had been working on the very gown which graced Mrs. Washington's receptions, and which, with an airing now and then for a fancy dress occasion, had reposed in cedar and camphor for more than a century. It was at that moment spread out in Miss Bolton's room; and when she had donned it, with the aid of the admiring Twins, she was, as they declared, "just the sweetest, old-fashioned-picture-book young lady" they'd ever seen. The ladies of "Mrs. Washington's court" wore amazingly low necks and short waists, but any lack of material had been supplied by Mrs. Hulburt's laces, arranged, largely, by Cathy, who was a genius when it came to constructing a dress—as much so as Sally was when it came to ripping and tearing and soiling them, Mrs. Prendle declared.

The party began at four: "four to nine," the invitations read. Thus early to begin on account of the children, and early to end because there was harvesting work still to be done, and the farmers had to be about at sun-

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rise if they hoped to have their hired help also about at that invigorating hour. Not an invitation had been declined, not a guest failed to appear. There were more reasons for this than the fame of Mrs. Hulburt's party repasts; the story of the found love tokens was known, and every woman was eager to see the precious evidences of a love romance she had heard from her childhood. Also, everyone wanted to meet the new teacher, and the more distant wanted to see the Squire's city-bred grandson, Orville.

So Miss Bolton, laughing at herself in her quaint old gown, helped Mrs. Hulburt welcome the guests on the veranda as they drove up; some in carriages which dated with Marion's gown, some in automobiles—these to the angry remonstrances of Towser. The women lost little time in inspecting the love treasures; the men lounged about the veranda, talking crops and live stock with the Squire; the children shyly received their introductions to Orrey, and there was a quiet hum of gossip until Jack appeared on the scene with a programme of sports and games which were to be carried

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on until six; then supper, then dancing, he said.

Jack knew every farmer, the name of every child, the housewifely merits of every matron, the sentimental history of every young man and woman. He had passed most of his time, when not in school or college, at Beaver Creek Farm—for he was an orphan—and was a great favorite. Many of the farmers asked him bluntly how about the talk that he was to go into business with Orrey's father? That had been announced months ago, yet here he was playing farmer after the date when he said he was to enter business. Jack assured his questioners that his uncle could not get along without him, but the farmers' wives looked at Marion and smiled at his explanation.

How I wish I had space and time to tell of that supper! But if I had I could not do it justice. Cold chicken, cold turkey, cold roast little pig, of course; and when you have eaten the cold stuffing of a roast little pig as compounded at Beaver Creek Farm, you will have another good reason for giving thanks for life.

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But where the critical palate and eyes of the guests were most employed was with the cakes, pies, tarts, preserves, and such noble dishes. Yes, I say dishes; not mere crumbs of dessert to be trifled with after all appetite has disappeared. Why, on that very occasion, Jack Hulburt—he said it was to encourage the children—took solid slices of cake and overlaid each mouthful with a scoop of comb honey as big as a teaspoon would disengage; and he repeated the operation until his aunt beamed on him, saying: “Jack, dear, it’s good to see some one with a real appetite. Mr. Prendle, have you tried the tomato marmalade with the pig? Mr. Severance, *do* let me give you another cup of coffee.”

Coffee! I wonder if it is because our ancestors forbore tea, upon a notable occasion, that they learned, and we have inherited, the art of making good coffee? You may travel the world over, but you will never drink its like. Grandmamma Hulburt was famous for her coffee among a people famous for making and drinking that most delectable beverage. The quantity of it her guests drank would

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amaze those who restrict themselves to one or two sips of it at any hour later than breakfast. The kitchen was like a hothouse with the fragrance of it, the whole house faintly breathed its perfume, and the refilling of the great urn before Mrs. Hulburt was the special task of one fortunate maid. Coffee, which you thought as black as night until you discovered a gleam, a shaft of glorious ruby color deep in the cup; which turned to liquid ivory as you poured in the cream—which would just pour. But we must on with the dance.

This was in the great room, opened only for such occasions, with a floor “as glary as ice,” Len informed Orrey when they went in to see the old folks—all but the children—form in ranks for the Virginia Reel. On a little platform at one end were the musicians: a violin, a bass fiddle, a flute, and a piano. The violinist called off, and anyone forgetful of the figures was admonished sharply by name. Mrs. Hulburt and Len’s grandfather, a fine young man of seventy-five, led the dance.

“Grandpa,” said Mrs. Hulburt to her partner—everyone in the community called him

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grandpa—"do you know how many years ago it is that we first danced the reel together?"

"I do, but I won't tell," answered her gallant partner promptly.

"I will, then," she said. "It is just fifty years go this Fall."

"You were but a chit in short clothes," grandpa quickly explained. He nodded to the musicians as a sign to begin, and with a whack of his heel the violinist struck up the inspiring old tune, and as he called, or chanted, the figures he kept up the rhythmic tapping with his foot which the dancers took up with hand-clapping. Up and down, across and around, back and forward, swing and reverse, march and countermarch, with such jollity as you would think would satisfy any hostess. But Mrs. Hulburt showed that she was not yet quite satisfied. Presently she was: suddenly, with a quick backward step and a jerk of each foot behind the other, Grandpa Severance disposed of his boots! Threw them off, if you please, and neatly kicked them against the wall behind him. Then, indeed, the dance went on!

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But we shall miss a good time if we do not go out on the veranda. It was almost dark now; that dim light which is more fearsome than total darkness, for you can see things to be afraid of, if you want to. Jack, with Miss Bolton's help, was starting a sheet-and-pillow-case ghost hunt. Here was adventure as well as sport. The children liked it, of course, for it's no end of fun to get a good scare when you know there isn't anything to be scared at, yet things are scaresome, after all. The young girls and young men left the dancing to the old folks and joined in the games. One was for a girl to venture out to the haunted tree, after touching the ghostly figure she dared to follow her. It showed the astonishing extent of human intelligence that scarcely a girl failed to touch the man she wanted to defy, when to an unconcerned onlooker each figure was exactly like every other.

There were thrilling screams, sudden laughs, then as abrupt but more eloquent silences as the young men overtook the girls—usually in the very darkest shadow of the haunted tree. Sally dared anyone to follow *her*; she was not

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afraid of man, boy, or ghost; but no other little girl had her daring. Cathy was so delightfully frightened that she would only hold Orrey's hand and utter little moans of fear, and actually forbade Orrey to follow Sally who, she felt certain, would be caught up by the ghost of Prudence and carried off to Canada—or, even worse, to England itself!

But the clock will not stay its fateful hands even on the best and happiest of nights, and soon the ghosts were recalled to earth for the purpose of answering parents, who reminded the laughing spirits that it was time to go home. Lensie Severance, as a further mark of honor, was to remain with Orrey all night.

He did so; and even after all the rest of the house was in silence, from their room came half-smothered yells of defiance, and such “pluffs!” of pillows striking heads that I suspect there was a famous battle raging there long after Grandmamma Hulburt had heard their prayers, and said she knew they would soon be asleep as they must be nearly tired to death. But feather pillows, I believe, were

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originally invented for warfare, and then adopted as head rests when it was discovered how nice they were to lay a head upon which has been battered by them for an hour. They are so exactly adapted to the end: they make no noise except that "pluff!" which is not likely to waken mother. Besides, as the conditions of the fight imply bare feet, there is no noisy tramping. Certainly, pillows were designed for warfare when any other weapon would call down the whole house in sleepy protest.

Once, when battle was suspended for gossip, Orrey asked Len how he had managed so well at the party with his shoes. "They nearly ground your feet off the other day," he said, "but to-night you were as spry in them as your grandpa in his stockings."

"Oats," responded Len.

"How, oats?"

"Don't you know even that?" asked Len, in surprise at the dense ignorance in which city boys grope as to all useful matters.

"I only know oatmeal," confessed Orrey. "How do you cure shoes with oats?"

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“ Well,” explained Len, “ if your shoes hurt you, take some oats in a peck measure and sprinkle them with water. Then you pack the oats into your shoes, turn over the tops, and tie 'em so's the oats can't bulge out that way—and there you are.”

“ Where are you? ” inquired the puzzled city boy.

“ Why, the damp oats swell, and have to bulge. If they can't bulge out of the tops they bulge the feet leather, and make them as easy to wear as no shoes at all.”

“ I'll try that some time,” said Orrey. “ It must be more fun than putting trees into your shoes at night.”

“ Better be careful,” warned Len. “ My dad brought home a new pair of boots, filled the feet with wet oats, tied up the legs, set 'em on a sawbuck in the wood shed, forget 'em—and what do you think happened? ”

“ Sprouted,” suggested Orrey.

“ Busted! ” announced Len. “ I saw 'em first, and thought they were two dragons' heads. The top sides of the feet were lifted right off the soles, like big open mouths, and all the

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pegs stuck up out of the soles—the lower jaws—like teeth. Gee! but my dad was talkative when he saw 'em.”

Their long pillow fights, their sleepless talks, resulted in Orrey and Len having a surprising adventure that very night.

CHAPTER XII

ORREY TACKLES A BURGLAR

ORREY and Len had a dozen times wished each other good night, and then began to talk again in whispers. But each good night was a little more sleepily said than the one before, and at last it seemed that the long, exciting night was to end in slumber when Len sat up in bed, clutched Orrey's arm, and whispered: "What's that?"

Orrey listened, heard a sound under the window which opened from the lower floor on their side of the house near some pines, and replied: "Ghosts!" Then he giggled, and Len giggled, too, but remained sitting up, listening intently.

"Honestly, there's somebody down there," he said in another minute.

Orrey, who had not been certain that what he heard was not the sound of a growing wind

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among the trees, now became wide awake, and agreed that the sound was like that of some one fussing about the window.

“It’s some one trying really to frighten us,” he said. “Jack, most likely. He knows we were sort of pretended frightened, and now he’s trying really to frighten us. Let’s give him a surprise,” and he jumped out of bed.

“What you going to do?” asked Len doubtfully.

“Give him a surprise. Come along, if you’re not afraid.”

“No more afraid than you!” declared Len, hopping out of bed as he spoke.

They crept softly downstairs to the kitchen door, opened it, stepped out into the cool night air, and then stopped to confer.

“If it isn’t Jack,” Orrey said confidently, “it’s some one Towser knows, because if it wasn’t he’d be making things lively.”

“That’s so,” Len assented, reassured. “If it isn’t Jack, I know who it is; it’s Alex Converse. He’s the greatest cut-up I ever saw.”

“We’ll give him something to cut up about,” Orrey remarked. “We’ll get into the bunch of

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trees behind him, and when I say 'Go!' we'll make a dash. I'll make a low tackle of his legs and you bang his head down. Before he can throw us off we'll wallop him good."

The prospect of giving such a surprise to Alex Converse tickled Len so much that he lost all his doubts, and they softly made their way to the pines from which, sure enough, they saw a figure at the window just under their bedroom.

"All ready?" whispered Orrey.

"All ready!" answered Len, breathing hard.

"Go!" said Orrey, and they darted out from the shadow of the trees. They were barefoot, of course, and approached the man from behind, and might have made the assault a complete surprise, but just as they dashed into the dim light of the half-clouded sky a sharp whistle sounded from near the front of the house. At the sound the man at the window wheeled sharply around. Then a curious thing happened: at the instant he turned both boys saw from his general appearance, the rough clothes revealed even in that dim light, that the man was neither Jack nor Alex, nor anyone they

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knew. They gasped in dismay, but did not falter in their rush.

All this occurred in a breath, and the man turned but a part of a second before the rushers were upon him. They carried out their programme as planned, except for that good walloping. Orrey dived with all the impetus of his rush, caught the man's legs low, and brought him down with the help of Len tugging at his head, but in another second the man roughly threw them aside and scuttled away into the shadow. As the boys lay sprawling on the grass, realizing that they had had quite a different experience from the one they had planned, Jack, in pyjamas, came running around from the kitchen door.

"What in the dickens are you kiddies up to *now*?" he asked.

They told him all that had happened, and he listened in silence; but when they had finished, he said laughingly, or seeming to laugh—but the boys were too excited to notice that it was a pretense:

"I'll bet a cookie Len was right. Perhaps it wasn't Alex—though it was just like that cut-

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up—but it was him or some of the fellows, dressed in a hired man's clothes. We won't say anything about it in the house, but we'll have a laugh on the fellow when we identify him."

This reassured the boys, and Jack went back to their room with them, tucked them in bed, and left them to go to his own bed, he said; but he went out again. First, all around the house, examining doors and windows; then he thought of Towser. What had become of that faithful watchman? Towser's faint bark was the answer. Jack found him a prisoner in a stable, where he had been locked in, by mistake, when the last of the company's carriages had been taken out. The first thing Jack noticed when he lit a stable lantern was that every hair along Towser's spine stood up like a bristle. He growled savagely, and ran out of the barn, sniffing the air eagerly. Jack called him back when he found a scent which interested him very much, and held him by his collar while he made a more thorough search of the house and grounds.

"No cut-up did this," he said to himself when

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he returned to the window and found marks of a jimmy on the sill.

In the morning he waited until he could speak to his uncle alone before he told him of the night's adventure. The Squire was able to throw some light on what probably had happened. He recalled that on the morning before, when he sold the last of the Jerseys to a couple of buyers, some strange men were hanging about the stock barn where the buyers had paid him cash. He thought nothing of that, for he knew that Scudder was hiring extra hands, and supposed they were men applying for work. He had not driven into the city to deposit the money because of the party.

"That accounts for it," he said to Jack after recalling the incident. "Those were tramps, or perhaps what are called yeggmen; and it may be that they follow cattle buyers on the lookout for just such an opportunity as I gave them by not going to the bank with the cash. I'll speak to the constable to-day, and have him look out for any strangers about here. We are seldom bothered with them. But we'll not alarm your aunt or Miss Bolton."

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The Squire drove off to the village behind his favorite Morgans; Jack and Marion went away in the pony cart to make some visits; Mrs. Hulburt was busy with the household affairs of the day after the party; Scudder was rushing his farm work, for there were signs of an approaching storm; and the boys, tired with excitement and loss of sleep, and burdened with the secret of their midnight adventure, passed a lazy morning in the attic.

“What’s good to do on a day like this, anyway?” asked Orrey after lunch. “It’s so close and hot that Indians would be too much like work.”

“We might be Indians in a canoe,” suggested Len. “Canoeing is never too hot, because when you get warm you can tumble overboard.”

So they strolled down to the Pond and embarked in the canoe Jack had sent for since Miss Bolton’s arrival. They paddled lazily about the lovely sheet of water, making several landings to be sure that no Indians lurked in the shadow of the swamp oaks, that no deer were waiting to be killed for food for their wigwam, or that no exhausted trapper needed

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their aid. This was as good as playing Indians after all, and nearly the whole afternoon passed before they recalled that Miss Bolton had spoken for a supply of cat-tails for decorative uses.

At the lower end of the Pond there was a perfect treasury of cat-tails and other decorative water growths, making a swampy bay into a rough bit of ground which was seldom visited except by stray sheep. They pushed quietly into the dim, green thicket, which parted for their canoe and closed softly behind them. When they stopped they could see the reeds shake from some hidden force.

"Fish," explained Len. "The reeds are the forests of the fish, and when they run against a tree it shakes. Doesn't it look funny?"

"Bully!" Orrey said. "I'll bet it's just the same in here as it was when there were Indians about."

"Of course," assented Len. "What would change it?"

"I wonder if there are any truly wild Indians about here now?" Orrey mused in a tone to encourage Len.

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“ Well,” responded the other, after a thoughtful pause, “ they *say* there aren’t any.” He looked so knowing and mysterious that Orrey lowered his voice as he asked, in the delicious hope that it might be so: “ Did you ever *see* any? ”

“ I don’t exactly say that I’ve *seen* any,” Len admitted, “ but I’d just like to know what some of the things are I *have* seen in the woods when it’s growing dark, and you wish you had gone out into the opening a little earlier. That’s just what *I’d* like to know.”

“ What do they look like—those things? ” asked Orrey, thrilled by the thought.

“ Can’t say exactly,” Len replied. “ Of course, if I could say exactly I would know whether they were Indians or——”

“ By jimony! What’s *that*? ” interrupted Orrey.

Len listened, then they whispered nervously. “ I guess we’ve talked ourselves into hearing things,” Len whispered. “ They say you can.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE EMPTY CANOE

ORREY and Len peered eagerly in the direction from which they thought they heard voices. Using the paddle as a pole, Orrey cautiously punted the canoe ahead, and the sounds gradually proved to be human voices, beyond doubt.

“Scudder, or some of the hands after lost sheep,” Len suggested.

Orrey made no answer, but silently shoved the canoe nearer the sound until he sharply backed water, and looked over his shoulder with such startled eyes that Len nearly upset the boat trying to get into a place where he could see what had so astonished his companion. They were nearer the bank than either had supposed, but the thick growth had concealed it until a gust of wind waved the reeds and

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gave them fitful views of a scene which made their hearts pound fast and hard.

Seated about the embers of a fire on which they evidently had cooked a meal were three men. They had finished eating, and now were smoking pipes as they gossiped over something which amused two of them. The third, who was not amused but looked sour over the chaffing, faced in the boys' direction—and both of them knew that they saw the man they had attacked the night before! He was nursing a blackened eye with a rag he now and then dipped in a can of water by his side, and listened, not pleasantly, to the others.

"I'm telling you right," said one of them. "Just two kids in their nighties; but Mull, here, swore he had been rough-housed by a gang of farm hands. Why, he went down before them like he'd been hammered with the night stick of the strongest cop on the force. When I asked him to go back with me, and said we'd gag the kids with their own nighties, he said he'd see me farther first. Then the young swell comes out, chases them in the house, and makes a hunt with the dog, and I knew the game was

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up for the night. But if the old one hasn't stowed the stuff in the bank to-day, we can try again to-night."

"And get shot full of holes," growled the man with the bruised eye. "The swell will put the whole country wise to what he knows, and they'll be waiting to give us a hot reception."

"Mull is right," said the man who had not before spoken. "As soon as it's dark, us for a freight train, and the next county. Tell me again: how did those kids give you such a lovely glim? They sure did put it out of business."

"Kids nothing!" the other answered angrily. "They were farm hands, and husky ones at that. One gives me the heel, and the other lams me coco on the ground good and plenty."

The others laughed at this, and went on with their bantering.

Orrey, as softly as possible, poled the canoe back to clear water, and then made it fly to a safe landing; but neither boy said a word until they were ashore and hidden in a clump of swamp oak.

"Which of us will go home to the house and

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tell?" gasped Orrey at last. "I'd like awfully to stay here and watch them. Jiminy! Real burglars!"

"I'd like to stay, too," pleaded Len.

"Of course," said Orrey; "but you can get to the house quicker than I; you know all the cut-offs."

"That's so," admitted Len regretfully. "I'll go, but you tell me everything that happens. *Everything!*"

"I will," Orrey assured him; and Len struck off for the house by the short paths he knew so well.

Only Mrs. Hulburt and the maid servants were at the house when Len arrived and quickly told his story.

"Go to Scudder," Mrs. Hulburt commanded, when she understood that Orrey had been left near the hiding place of the men. "As sure as that boy is the Squire's grandson, he'll look for all the danger there is. O Lensie! you should have made Orville come home with you."

"One of us had to stay to watch them," ex-

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plained Len. "It'll be growing dark soon, and then they'll be off."

"Go to Scudder," she repeated; and herself called up the Squire by telephone, and said to him simply: "Come home as fast as you can."

Len soon found Scudder, who whittled a stick as he listened to the end of the story.

"I suspicioned that something was wrong to-day," was his comment, as he put his hand on the head of the dog, who looked as if he had half-understood the boy's story. "Towser's been trying all day to tell me that something was wrong somewhere, but I've been so busy I didn't rightly listen to him. Come, Towse!"

The man and the dog and the boy hurried as fast as they could around the Pond to the upper end, yet it was almost dark when they reached there, and came upon—the canoe pulled up on the bank, but no Orrey, no men, in sight!

"Back and tell the folks!" cried Scudder. "It'll be raining soon, so Towser and I must follow the scent while it lasts!"

Squire Hulburt had often set out from the bank to see what time he could make to the

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Farm behind the pair of Morgans, but he never succeeded in a fair trial. Some one always stopped him on the road, to ask what the news was about the new creamery, or some gossip of their common affairs. But this time the Morgans had a fair chance to make a record. They did it! Many a neighbor, standing in the road, waved for the Squire to stop, but he shouted that he must hurry on. They soon learned the reason: those who had telephones were called to Beaver Creek Farm to join the hunt for the kidnappers; others received the news from galloping horsemen, who shouted orders to picket the roads; to put men on duty who had guns, and would shoot if necessary.

“The Squire’s grandson—the handsome little fellow we saw last night at the party—Orville’s boy—kidnapped by men who tried to rob the house!” The word flew over the district; farmers and their grown sons were soon hurrying to their assigned places, or to the Squire, to report to him. Mrs. Prendle drove over with her husband, to comfort and aid Mrs. Hulburt; and the Twins so begged to be taken that they, too, were bundled into the carriage.

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Len's report of the men's intention to make for the railroad as soon as it was dark was the only clew; so every road they could take in that direction, every farm they could cross and strike the road, was soon swarming with men and dogs, eager in the hunt. All men were armed. "If you have to shoot to stop them, shoot!" was the Squire's order. Signals were agreed upon to recall, to announce the finding, a new clew, or the need of help.

After Jack had assisted his uncle arrange the hunt he started out alone, but was soon joined by two aids who would not be denied—Sally and Len. The latter, sore at heart because he thought Mrs. Hulburt blamed him for leaving Orrey alone to watch the men, was determined to go on the hunt. While twin Cathy soberly ground coffee, or spread bread for sandwiches, content to give these womanly aids, Sally, seeing Len follow Jack, quietly followed Len.

"All right," said Jack, after vainly ordering his young volunteers to return to the house. "You couldn't be a bit wetter after a minute of this rain if you jumped into the Pond. So come on. But, mind you, keep close to me."

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The threatening storm broke fiercely almost with the setting of the sun; then Mrs. Prendle and Miss Bolton turned from their anxious peering into the darkness, and helped Mrs. Hulburt in the practical work of preparing refreshments for the wet and tired hunters when they should return.

“And they will return with Orville,” Mrs. Hulburt said, as she went quietly about her homely duties. “I have prayed to God.”

CHAPTER XIV

KIDNAPPED

WHEN he was first left alone, Orrey debated whether he should go around to the head of the Pond by land, to watch the men, or return by canoe to the reeds. He decided upon the latter course, for his play at Indians had taught him that he made a wonderful amount of noise traveling by land. The alternative of not going back at all did not occur to him. Physical caution had been left out of his makeup, and in city streets seldom out of sight of a policeman, always accompanied by nurse, governess, or parent, he had never suspected the evil there is in such men as he was returning to watch.

He tried to find his way back to the place where the discovery had been made, but there was no trail through the reeds, his course al-

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tered, and where he now pushed in the canoe the water growth was thinner. He was pleased with this, however, for he had a better view of the men, never thinking that in such a place his own discovery by them would be more likely. They were not particularly evil-looking; one, who laughed and chatted the most, was rather agreeable-looking, Orrey thought. He heard the others call him Bleecker, and he rightly guessed that the name came from the fact that the man made his headquarters in some resort in the street of that name when he was in the great city.

Orrey could not always catch the words the men used, nor understand all those he did hear, for their talk was largely in a slang strange to his ears. Once, after a little start of surprise by Bleecker, which did not make Orrey suspect anything, for he saw no glance directed toward himself, the men whispered so that he could not hear at all. Then Bleecker said loudly to the third man:

“Red, go over to some farmhouse and see if you can learn anything about the south-bound freights. It’s near time for our get-away.”

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"All right," said the man addressed as Red; and he rose, stretched his arms, and wandered off into the woods.

The others talked loudly now, using language Orrey could easily understand, and he became engrossed in their stories about their adventures of the night before, in which they made many interesting surmises about the "two brave lads" who had attacked Mull so fearlessly. "This," thought Orrey, "will be bully stuff to remember and tell Len," and he listened with all his attention.

"Now, young fellow, we'll go ashore!"

These words spoken close at his side startled Orrey. He turned to find Red, waist-deep in water, holding on to the canoe. Orrey reached for his paddle, but Red grinned and showed that he held it in one hand.

"No more tackling like you did last night," Red said, pushing the canoe through the reeds toward the shore. At his first words the other men had come down to the bank, and when the bow of the canoe lifted on the beach, Bleecker took hold and dragged it well up on land.

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Orrey, too bewildered to speak, and now thoroughly alarmed, stepped silently out of the boat. As he did so, Mull aimed a blow at him, but the arm was caught roughly by Bleecker, who turned on the fellow fiercely, exclaiming:

“You cur! I’ll close your other eye if you hurt this kid. Strike a little swell like this just because he banged your coco!”

“It wasn’t your coco that was banged, or you wouldn’t be so polite,” growled Mull.

The men hurried Orrey up the bank and far into the woods before they stopped and held a whispered consultation. Then Bleecker turned to him and asked:

“Are you the old gent’s son—the one who did the business with the cattle buyers?”

“I’m his grandson; and you’d better let me go or he’ll put you in jail.”

“I should think likely he would—if he could,” said Bleecker pleasantly. “But I’m interested in you, for I like a plucky lad. Now whose son might you be? Nobody’s in these parts—not with those clothes on, eh?”

“I’m Orville Hulburt, Junior,” answered the boy loudly. He spoke in that tone because he

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felt as if he might cry, but was determined not to, and hoped to keep his voice steady by raising it; but it was not the raised voice which made Bleeker regard him with sudden new interest.

“Orville Hulburt,” he repeated. “Now, that’s not a common name. Do you mean that you’re the son of the Orville Hulburt who’s doing those stunts in Wall Street the papers tell about?”

“I don’t know what Wall Street stunts are,” Orrey replied. “But my father is very rich; and if you don’t let me go home this very minute he’ll have you arrested and sent to prison.”

In saying what he did about his father, Orrey had broken a family commandment. He knew his father was rich: that was certain to be known by him, a boy surrounded by gossiping and boastful servants, but his mother had often cautioned him not to speak of the fact. “It was bad form,” she told him, and with all other bad forms he was to avoid it. But he also knew that money was powerful. Living in the atmosphere which surrounds men as rich as was his father, the knowledge that money was power could not escape him; and now, in the moment of his first

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danger, he could not be blamed for threatening the use of that power in his own defense. Nor could he know that in telling of his father's wealth he had revealed just the fact which determined his captors to kidnap him. That had been only a half-formed purpose when they discovered that they were being watched by the incautious boy. The first thought which prompted Bleecker to send Red around behind Orrey, and capture him in the canoe, was to keep their watcher with them until they had made their escape. Then, when they had him in their hands, came the plan which they discussed at first, of making a quick demand on the Squire for the cattle buyers' payment, for Orrey's ransom. But the discovery that their captive was the son of Orville Hulburt, the man of whose success in finance even they had heard, prompted the more desperate scheme of kidnapping him over the not distant Canadian border, and there holding him for a bigger ransom.

Darkness fell fast; scurrying black clouds flashed lightning and rolled heavy thunder from hill to hill. For a little time the trees had been silent and motionless; now their branches lashed

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from side to side, and the wind, which tore and stripped them, hissed menacingly.

After walking some distance, and striving, in the gathering gloom, to note the lay of the land from several points at the edge of the woods, the men consulted again. Then Bleecker tied one of Orrey's wrists to one of his own, saying:

"We're not going to hurt you, sonny, but we want you to come along with us quietly. If you make a holler we'll gag you, and that *will* hurt."

Now they could not agree in which direction to go, not even where lay the edge of the woods. A deluge of rain began to fall, and among the trees it became pitchy dark. The men were confused; in sudden panic.

"Could you find your way to the railroad?" Bleecker shouted, holding his mouth close to Orrey's ear, for the thunder cracked and boomed incessantly.

"No, I couldn't; and I wouldn't if I could," shouted Orrey. "You better let me go, I tell you. Len has gone for help, and it will be here pretty soon."

"Who's Len?" the man shouted back; and now his voice showed alarm.

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“Never you mind,” said Orrey. “You let me go!”

He struggled now, but one of the men, he could not see which, held his arms roughly, and all began stumbling through the forest, the men trying to find their way out into the open.

Stumbling, in truth, for only when searing shafts of lightning made even the dense woods brilliant, could they see from tree to tree, and stumbles and falls were frequent. On they struggled, on and on, bewildered, bruised, cursing the storm, stumbling on and on. They must have gone thus for an hour when a spreading sheet of light from the clouds showed them—the canoe and the drenched remains of their fire! In their blind struggles they had gone, as lost wanderers often go, around in a circle, back to their starting point.

“We might have passed even this, and gone on to the farmhouse,” shouted one of the men with an oath. “There we’d get ropes around our necks for comforters, I’m telling you. What’ll we do now?”

“Make another try,” commanded Bleeker doggedly. “Come on.”

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Orrey was now almost exhausted; he could scarcely keep up with his captors, although always one and sometimes two of them dragged him along. They had again traveled half an hour, in what direction, how far, none knew, when they came upon a tangle they could not penetrate. Struggle and push as they might, they were repelled by interlacing branches which whipped their faces and threatened their eyes.

"The windfall," thought Orrey drowsily. Then came another thought which gave him heart: "The cave!"

Anything to end this bruising struggle, this facing of the frightful lightning, which just then ripped a great tree from top to roots, so close as to half stun them. Orrey tugged at the sleeve of the man closest to him and shouted, when the man bent his head to listen:

"I know where we can rest—be safe."

"Show us!" shouted the man, with savage eagerness. Guided by the next flash, Orrey took the men to the cave. One quickly examined it, and soon called to the others to follow him.

But Orrey had done his utmost; at the very mouth of the cave he could stand no more, and

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sank down in a half faint. Bleecker lifted him in his arms, not ungently, saying:

“You’ve a good heart. I’m sorry for you, youngster.”

As Orrey’s head fell back on Bleecker’s shoulder the little rain-soaked cap which until then had held on like a grape skin, indeed, was brushed off and fell to the ground.

There was no water in the cave, for the ground above the entrance lay so as to divert the flood coming down the face of the hill; and the men threw themselves on the dry floor with weary sighs and soon slumbered almost like the dead. Orrey was asleep even before Bleecker made doubly secure the knots in the cord at his wrist and the boy’s, and the leader lay down by his side, muttering:

“Poor little fellow! It will be a tough job to spoil your beauty to make your dad come down with the ransom. But that’s the sure way to bring such as your dad and mother to terms.”

CHAPTER XV

THE NIGHT FIGHT

WHEN Scudder told Len to go back and make his dismal report about the empty canoe to the people at the Farm, and Len, frightened, sobbing, and weary had started off on a run, Scudder called to him:

“Did you paddle, or Orville?”

“Orville,” shouted Len, and ran on.

Scudder asked this because he wanted something to give Towser the scent; something which should tell the hound what he was to do. The dog barely sniffed at the handle of the paddle before he showed that he knew what was expected of him, and darted into the woods. Scudder followed, but we need not, for their course was the same rough and stumbling one we have just traversed with Orrey and his captors. The rain made the scent hard to hold. It is said that

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some dogs cannot follow when even a fresh scent has been modified by a pelting rain; but Towser made headway. Sometimes he ranged far from the trail, but something led him right again; a brush or tree against which Orrey had lurched, a bit of his torn clothing. Who knows? At times the dog seemed to Scudder, as he was revealed by the lightning, to be taking the scent from the very air.

Scudder fared less badly than those he followed; his lifelong training made him skillful in such travel; his instinct seemed to act as *feelers* for him in the inky darkness and save him many collisions; yet even with this advantage he was bruised and ragged when, urging on the dog, he almost fell over him as Towser stopped with a short yelp. Scudder used his hands to see with while waiting for the lightning to show what had occurred, and found Towser rigid, with one paw planted firmly on a soft drenched object. At the next flash he exclaimed:

“Orrey’s cap! Good boy! Good Towser! Good old fellow! Let’s talk it over. The cave? Would they go in there if Orrey showed it to them? Yes. They’d go anywhere to get away

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from this. Watch it, Towser. Scudder's going a-visiting."

When Len went to Scudder with the story of what the boys had seen at the swamp end of the Pond, he did not speak of the midnight adventure with the man at the window. He had been told not to speak of it, and he was the kind of boy to obey such instruction. So, it will be seen, Scudder started off to the Pond having in mind that he was only to warn some tramps away from the Farm, and see that they left no fire near the edge of the woods. It was because he thought of them only as tramps that he took no weapon with him.

But now, as he slipped down the ladder to enter the cave, he knew he might have to fight desperate men; men bold and bad enough to kidnap a boy, and that there were three of them. But he did not hesitate. He did take out his jackknife—glad that it was a big one—open it and drop it into the side pocket of his jumper, where it could be reached quickly. Then he took off his heavy boots, crawled down into the cave, and fell softly at full length.

He was, I think I have said, a tall, lank man,

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not gainly in his walk nor in any of his movements ordinarily, but now, could you have seen him, you would have said he was as graceful as a tiger, and have been reminded of that animal, too, perhaps. Only his hands and stockinged feet touched the floor, and at every inch of progress he softly felt forward. Soon he heard the heavy breathing of the exhausted sleepers, which told him he was right in his hunt; then he touched one, softly as a cat, then another, until he had made out the forms of the three men and the boy. He was glad to find that Orrey was nearest to the mouth of the cave; a lucky chance, probably, for the men in throwing themselves down could not have known which was the front, which the back. His touch told him that Orrey's wrist was tied by a cord to something.

He gently ran his hand along the cord until he found the other end fastened to a man's wrist. The rain-soaked knot at Orrey's wrist would not loosen, nor would it slip over his hand. Scudder held the cord so as to prevent any pressure or jerk acting as a signal to the sleeping man, then took his knife and sawed on the cord between the boy's wrist and where his own hand

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held it. It was a tough cord, and wet; and the strands parted slowly under the gentle pressure which was all that he dared to apply, for fear of a slip of the blade which would make a noise. But strand by strand he felt it part, and with each parting his heart beat faster. At last the cord was cut, and again he dropped the open knife into his pocket.

Next he stretched himself at length by Orrey's side, one hand hovering as light as a feather over the boy's lips to stifle any cry he might make if alarmed suddenly. Placing his mouth close to the sleeper's ear he whispered softly:

"Orville! Orville! It's Scudder, Orville. Don't be frightened, it's Scudder."

This he patiently repeated over and over, gently as a mother whispering her love to a sleeping babe. Orville told, later, that for a time after he heard the voice he thought he was dreaming, and wished it might be real, but could not understand how it could be; then he thought that all he had gone through had been a dream, and whispered:

"Are we at home, Scudder?"

"No, Orville, but we will be soon. Are you

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wide awake? Yes, this is Scudder, and he wants you to understand something. Crawl in this direction; it's toward the opening of the cave. Make no noise. Crawl quietly, Orville, and Towser will take you home if I don't come."

"But you must come, too," the boy whispered.

"I'll come if I can. But you get out of here. If you hear these men wake up and say something to me, *don't you turn back!* As you love your mamma, don't you turn back, but cut for it. I can take care of them long enough for you to get outside."

Again Scudder took the knife from his pocket, grasped it firmly, half crouched over the sleeping men between them and the way of escape, and waited patiently.

Orville felt his way out of the cave; and when the little noise he made told Scudder that the boy was at the opening, if not yet above ground, he, too, crept away. He had just reached the foot of the ladder, when a terrific barking by Towser woke the men behind him, and, throwing caution away, Scudder ran up the ladder, pulled it up after him, and yelled:

"Run for it, Orrey! Run!"

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He heard the shouts of the men as they discovered their captive's escape, their confused movements as they sought the way out, and their clumsy scramble from the cave. They would have to "shin out," Scudder said to Orrey, and that would delay some. He swung the boy up on his shoulders and started around the windfall. The rain had stopped, and already some stars were glinting through the rifted clouds, making light enough for Scudder to find a path. But the same light which helped him helped his pursuers, who, unhampered as Scudder was, gained on him.

"Stop!" called one of the men. "We can see you. Stop, or we'll fire."

Scudder swung Orrey down to the ground, saying:

"Now, boy, do your best. I'll hold 'em back; and if they do fire it'll call some of the other searchers. Run! With him, Towser! With him, you rascal!"

But Towser was growling, and for the first time in his life refused to obey Scudder's command.

Scudder picked up a limb of a tree which the

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wind had blown down, and, as he defied his pursuers, stripped some of the branches from the limb to make it a better weapon.

“Come on, you villains!” he cried. “I’m Scudder, and I’m just aching to have a crack at you. Run for it, Orville. Come on, you thieves, if you’re not afraid!”

The men stopped and called out:

“We want no trouble with you, Reub; but you let us have that boy, or we’ll take him.”

“Take nothing!” shouted Scudder. “Run, Orville, I tell you! Run!”

He had glanced over his shoulder and saw that the boy would not leave. It was not in Orrey’s nature to desert a friend in distress.

There was a flash and the sound of a pistol shot. It seemed to madden Scudder, for now he called out in a frenzy of rage:

“Shoot, dern you, shoot! You can’t hit nothing. Come on and fight! I’m Scudder—one against three, and just aching for it—and you’re afraid! You skunks!”

The men made a dash. The tree limb came down on the head of the first and laid him low. Now Towser got into the fray; darting around

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Scudder he attacked one of the men so viciously that the man screamed in pain. Seeing the man checked, Scudder brought his clumsy weapon again into action with a sweep and a flourish and laid out the second man. But there was a third to be attended to.

As Towser darted around one side of Scudder, Orrey ran around the other. He saw that the third man must be held in check, or he would get in too close for Scudder to deal with him with that ungainly weapon of his. The man saw his chance, and, as Towser attacked the second, the third man tried to get into a clinch with Scudder. I have said that Orrey had been taught to box; and he could hit a sharp blow, too. He now darted in between Scudder and the advancing man and went at him like a gamecock. He wanted to get the man's hands down, seeing that he held them above his head to catch Scudder's mighty club, and he rained blows on the man's face, jumping up for each blow as if he had never known fatigue; and at last the man lowered his hands and struck Orrey sharply in the face, knocking him down. Then the swish of Scudder's weapon was heard, the limb de-

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scended on the unprotected head of number three, and he fell senseless.

Without waiting to learn the exact result of his blows, Scudder picked up Orrey, once more raised him to his shoulder, and ran.

They saw a swinging lantern, and soon made out the voice of Jack, shouting; and his voice was accompanied by the treble yells of Len and Sally. Orrey slipped down to the ground and was hugged and kissed by Jack, Len, and Sally all at once.

"We laid 'em all out! Orville and me and Towser! We fit 'em all, and laid 'em all out!" exclaimed Scudder, dancing about the party in wild leaps of joy.

"But where are the villains?" asked Jack. "We must not let them get away."

"No hurry," chuckled Scudder. "None on 'em will be leaving where they are for a quarter of an hour, or so."

The pistol shot had, as Scudder thought it would, attracted other searchers; and they, with Jack, soon had the kidnappers safely bound. We, readers, have seen the last of them. They were sent to prison for long terms, and Scudder

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was the star witness at the notable trial. Let us hasten to join more pleasant company.

Soon Orrey was in the arms of his grandmother, and, in quick succession, the arms of a score of the others; and the big bell in the cupola over the barn rang out the joyful signal:

“Come in! All’s well.”

CHAPTER XVI

A FREE CIRCUS

ON the day after his great adventure Orville was a sore and lame but happy boy; and the chief cause of his happiness was that he had a black eye. And it was a "good" one, as Len remarked in admiring envy. It had come from the blow which knocked him down when he was checking the third man to be felled by Scudder, and although his grandmother's ministrations of hot water and herbs had reduced the swelling so that Orrey could see out of the eye as usual, the adored black was there as testimony that he had been in the battle. He tried not to show *too* much pride in this precious possession; but during the day he usually disposed himself so that Len could see the honorable scar without much trouble.

In the morning the Squire told Jack to take

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Orrey with him on any pretext, to keep him away from the Farm.

“ People will be coming here all day to talk over the kidnapping; and hearing it discussed so much will give the lad a real notion of the danger he was in. As it is, he does not understand; looks upon it as a bit of adventure. I don't want his spirit broken by thinking about it in any other way, by coming to brood over it, as he will if he hears all the talk which will be going on here to-day.”

Orrey knew that his father and mother were coming, and he was eager for any plan which would help pass the long day before he could see them, for, in truth, he was more than a little homesick. He did not know that his father had been in communication with the Farm by long-distance telephone from the time the Squire had notified Orville's parents of the affair, early in the evening. The assurance that their boy was safe did not by any means satisfy his parents; they wanted to hug the youngster as proof that he was all right, and had taken the midnight train soon after receiving word that he was at home and tucked in bed.

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Jack had an interesting trip for the boys: an automobile he had sent for would arrive that day by the Lake ferry; and he told Orrey and Len that he would drive them down there, show them the famous dug-out, and bring them home in the automobile.

“Now as to this dug-out,” Jack said, as they drove across the lovely, rolling country to the lake, “the chaps who write history books do not tell the story as we old settlers believe it. As we understand it—and I’d like to know who should if we who licked Burgoyne don’t understand it—that dug-out was designed for a very foxy purpose.”

“What do we understand about it?” asked Orrey, who liked to think of himself as among those who defeated Burgoyne.

“The story is this,” Jack answered. “When Burgoyne sailed up the lake with his war ships, part of his army being on the east of the lake, part on the west, he wanted to send an expedition with cannon up to the city of Vergennes, to destroy an arsenal filled with supplies for the American army. The only way he could get his cannon up Otter Creek was by boat, unless he

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used more of his troops to drag the cannon than he wanted to detach from the main expedition. But some good patriot had guessed that the enemy would want to destroy that arsenal, so he took the precaution to sink a ship in the mouth of the channel, and Burgoyne found it blocked against him. As the bottom of the lake was found to be soft and easily cut, Burgoyne started to dig a channel around the sunken ship, for the passage of some of his boats big enough to carry cannon; and this very day you kiddies can see for yourselves if the story is true; for the water is low, and the dug-out, as we boys always called it, can be plainly traced."

Whether Jack's explanation is good history or not I will not attempt to decide; but this I know, and so Orrey and Len found: the trace of the attempt to cut a channel around the mouth of Otter Creek can be seen by anyone who will go there when the water is low.

How it inspired the boys' imagination! How they wished they had lived in those days when fellows only a little older than they had guns, and knew how to use them! The boys decided that the reason that Burgoyne gave up the at-

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tempt was not because he had to hurry on to attack the patriots at old Ticonderoga, but that some of the youngsters the Squire had told about harried the enemy at work on the channel; sharp-shot them so delightfully that they could not be kept at the work. The boys determined to reproduce that part of the campaign if the Twins could be induced to play canal diggers.

The automobile was found on the landing in charge of a mechanic from the shop; and he and Jack soon had it ready for the home journey. The mechanic was eager to take the return train back to New York, and after showing Jack—who had run automobiles, but not that kind—the peculiarities of the machine, asked him if he thought he could run it. Jack thought he could, and at the start it seemed that his confidence was warranted. They flew up the road toward the hills, and the boys shouted with delight at the fun of such traveling. But at the first bit of steep road, when Jack changed gear, trouble fell upon them. And this was at a most unlucky place. A farmer, driving a loaded hay wagon, pulled off to the side of the road and asked Jack to pass. Just then the machine gave a succes-

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sion of sighs and grunts and came to a stop, right by the side of the wagon. The horses began to tangle themselves up in the harness, and the farmer yelled out:

“Get a move on, and have the trouble over!”

This was good advice, but, though Jack pulled and twisted and wiggled ever so many throttles and levers and cocks, he could not start the car. That is, the wheels did not start. Everything else did. The machine began to wheeze and cough and sneeze, tremble and rock and rattle, and the hay-wagon horses stood on their heels and heads in turn. Some pigs, being shifted from field to field across the road, went into a panic; and their herder, trying to round them up, left a gate open out of which there emerged a miscellaneous army of almost every kind of animal known to the farm. The road was alive with neighing, mooing, squealing, cackling animals who were in vocal hysterics, each after its kind, and scampering in fright and excitement. Only a bunch of turkeys behaved like sensible beings. They stalked quite up to the whirring, snuffling machine and regarded it with unafraid curiosity.

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Orrey and Len were weak with laughter at all this free circus, but now and then offered Jack advice which he might have resented had he not been the best-natured man in the world. Perhaps he did not hear all that was said, as he was generally on his back under the machine, doing things with tools, which did not mend matters, though it did produce new symptoms of insanity from the machine; symptoms which were in turn communicated to the frenzied assortment of live stock, and caused the hay-wagon horses to make earnest efforts to mount to the top of their load with the angry and noisy driver.

Just as things were at their maddest and noisiest state—the machine having added a fit of fire-spitting to its other oddities—the Squire drove up.

“Hello, Jack,” he called out cheerily, “can I help you?”

Jack crawled out from under the machine, dusty, oily, grimy, sweaty, but still good-natured. “Yes, uncle,” he said. “If you happen to have a stick of dynamite in your pocket you can blow this machine into the next county. That would help some.”



Orrey and Len were weak with laughter at all this free circus.

A FREE CIRCUS

The Squire gave his horses to a bystander to hold; led the hay-wagon team out of the danger zone; told the grinning farm hands to clear the road of vagrant live stock; did some simple thing to the machine, and said, "Now I guess she'll go along."

"Thank you," said Jack when he found everything all right. "Get in and have a ride with us."

"No," the Squire replied, climbing into his buggy; "I've lived a God-fearing and unprofane life for sixty-five years, and I don't want to break my record at this late day by riding in one of those contraptions. Geddap, girls!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE BAREBACK RIDE

ON that same day—the one after the kidnapping—a strange thing happened in Scudder's life. I think I have mentioned that Orville's trunk contained presents for Scudder from Orville's mother. She was a daughter of the gentleman who owned the famous show place in that part of the State, where the gentleman played at farming in the summer and Orville's mother passed most of her childhood's vacation. Scudder, then employed on the show place, had taught her to ride and drive, and been her faithful, adoring attendant for many years, until Orville's father wooed and won the belle and heiress.

Then Scudder went to Beaver Creek Farm as head farmer, where he heard much of "Nelly," as she still was to him, and saw her during her

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visits to the Farm. All that he heard and knew of her was the romance of Scudder's life; her beauty, her social greatness, her children, were all the world to Scudder outside of his work. That work was a great deal to him.

The Squire declared that Scudder took but one holiday in the year, and could not be induced to take more. On the Fourth of July it was holiday with him from daylight to midnight. He led in all the games which followed the reading of the Declaration of Independence by the Squire to the assembled countryside; he fired salutes from the brass cannon to the Day, to Washington and all the other saints in his political calendar, to the State, the County, the Farm, and a special one to General Schuyler; (he never gave the glory of defeating Burgoyne to Gates, but to Schuyler, as taught by the Squire); he set off the fireworks in the evening; he helped Mrs. Hulburt serve the patriotic punch which regaled the farmers on that glorious day; and had such a good time that it lasted him for the whole year.

But on the morning after the rescue of Orville he decided to take a holiday—not to celebrate

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his own part in that rescue, but because he had been called to the telephone when he brought Orville in, and thanked by "Nelly," who asked him to meet her and her husband and drive them to the Farm.

The present which Orville had brought to Scudder was an entire suit of Sunday clothes, including gloves, shoes, and hat; and Orrey's mother had written to Scudder that he was to wear them to church. Of course he had no notion of doing such a wasteful thing; he always hurried home from church to look over things at the Farm, and such clothes were not for such doings. He hung the garments up in his room as if they had been a picture; but on the eventful day he decided to wear Nelly's gift, by way of celebrating her coming. As to the clothes, they were tight enough, and horribly fashionable, but as to the gloves and boots their tightness was nothing less than torture. He wanted to drive down to the station with a pair of spirited horses, but he found that his hands in those gloves were as useful for driving as if they were wooden; so he hitched up a pair of work horses who would drive themselves. He was a

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sight to draw expressions of delight and amazement from farmer's wives and children as he passed along the road to the station.

When Orville's mother saw him she gave him such a hug as took away what little breath he had managed to get into his lungs, compressed as they were by the close embrace of the new coat; and Orville's father gave him a hug, too, and they made so much of his rescue of their boy that he blushed and declared that it was nothing at all.

The first thing Orville's father asked was to have Scudder take him over the route of the hunt as nearly as he could. They found the limb Scudder had wielded so well; and now Scudder has that limb reduced in size to a polished oak cane, with a gold head on which is engraved Scudder's name and the date of the rescue. That was not the only present Scudder received, for, after Orrey returned in the automobile with Jack—you see they really did get the machine to the Farm—and the boy had told his version of the adventure, his father wrote out a check which made Scudder's eyes blink when he got it.

After Orrey's mother had kissed his black eye

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a dozen times, laughed and cried over him, scolded and praised him—in the way mothers have of doing, which would make boys uncertain whether they stood well or ill with them, if they didn't know well enough that they always stand well—after she released him his father said to Orrey:

“That's a lovely eye you have, my son. Did you land on the fellow before you got that?”

This was the most interesting part of the story to Orrey, and he replied excitedly:

“Indeed, dad, I did. I remembered all that Kelly tells me when he gives me boxing lessons, and I got in a lot of bully wallops before he landed on me. I could have saved myself then, but, you see I wanted him to strike at me, to give Scudder a chance with that club of his. So I laid myself open to encourage the fellow to bring his hands down and take a crack at me.”

“Did you, though?” exclaimed the father, proudly. “You really did! Good! I wonder if Scudder couldn't find a good riding pony for you somewhere about the county. One for you, and one for Len, too, if we can dig up the money.

THE BAREBACK RIDE

Laid your guard open to draw his fire, to help Scudder? Well, well!"

My own opinion is that Mr. Hulburt's pride in Orrey was because he had discovered that boys who are brave are honest. Indeed, I think that honesty is one of the signs of courage; that truthfulness can best be developed by encouraging in boys those acts, games, pastimes, habits which cultivate courage.

There is the first little bit of a sermon I've preached; and I'll not apologize for it, because it will be the last, and an author is allowed one sermon under the rules.

Those were doubly happy days for Orrey while his parents remained on the Farm: such fun in showing his father a score of things to do and places to see, at all of which his father expressed such surprise the son never suspected that the elder knew all those places and things a score of years ago. So proud he was to have his mother read to him and his companions "in different voices," so as to make it as good as a theater.

Every boy believes that his mother is the best mother in the world, for the very good reason

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that she is; but Orrey believed his mother was different from others in certain daring he had heard old servants talk about, but he had never seen. That visit opened his eyes. The children were on a trip with Orrey's mother and Scudder, to inspect some horses in a pasture. One of the horses came up to the party fearlessly, and tried to get its nose in Scudder's pocket.

"Fine two-year-old," says Orrey's mamma.

"Finest colt in the State," asserted Scudder.

The lady slipped her hands, which had been patting the animal's neck, down to its back. Then she looked with a mischievous smile at Scudder, and raised her left foot.

Scudder looked doubtful for a moment; his hand went down, the foot went into it, there was a lift and a spring, and Orrey's mother was on the colt's back.

This was too great a liberty for even the pet of the paddock, and with a snort, a shake of his head, a flourish of his tail, he was off on a keen run. He went so swiftly towards a fence that it looked as if he would have to take it, or stop so suddenly as to throw his rider over it. But the lady held on; the colt returned on a run; the

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children danced with delight and gave back a dozen "Hoop-las!" for every one the rider sang out to them.

The Squire and Orrey's father entered the pasture just then. The bareback rider's husband did not seem surprised at what he saw.

"That good lady," he said, "will, of course, break her neck, one day; but why should I spoil her fun in the meantime by asking her to be careful?"

When the wild ride was over, and Orrey's mother slipped to the ground with the remark, "Like old times, eh, Scudder?" her son felt sudden doubts, as boys will, sometimes, of the propriety of his mamma's act. But these doubts vanished when he saw that the other children wholly approved. Len was enthusiastic; Sally, of course was extravagant in her delight, and declared that she was going to learn to do the same thing. Even demure Cathy regarded the fine lady with added approval.

The Squire urged that the kidnapping adventure should make no difference in the goings, comings and play of the children, for that would

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be likely to make them timid. So the only precaution taken to quiet the mind of the anxious mother was that Towser should always accompany Orrey; and from that time the old hound walked gravely by the boy's side, or ran and barked with the children as they played. And play was redoubled now, for school days were drawing near, and Len advised that no play time be lost.

Miss Bolton received a letter addressed to the teacher of the district school, which proved to be a challenge to the boys of her school for a series of football games with the eleven of the graded school. Jack offered to coach the team if Orrey and Len could get enough players together; and many visits to the village were made by the boys for the purchase of supplies. It was during one of these visits that they came upon something which led to an adventure of too much importance to be told in chapters relating to anything else.

CHAPTER XVIII

CATHY DISCOVERS A SECRET

THERE had been frost! Oh, how much delight that means to boys and girls in the country! Frost! That means that the prickly, spiny, hard-to-handle chestnut burs have opened, disclosing, if you have the patience to wait for them, that they have a velvety inside to show; and as they open they drop their rich brown, gleaming fruit at your very feet, making you sorry for the trouble you took to whirl clubs up among the branches to knock down nuts before mother Nature was willing to let you have them. Frost! That means that the quince trees are to be picked, their dusky yellow fruit to be transmuted by the alchemy of grandmamma's copper kettles into slices of deep red deliciousness; that the latest of the pears are to be gathered and preserved in pure

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white syrup the making of which is such fun to watch (with never an idea, of course, that you may get the syrup kettle to clean); it means that the hardy apples are full ripe and ready for the cider mill, to be ground and pressed into sweet, tangy nectar, the best that boy or girl ever drank; that the evenings are cool enough for a log fire before which some of those big apples in the cellar bin may be roasted; that pop corn is cured enough to be popped; that out in the kitchen these days the housewife is busy with the greatest mystery-luxury of all, that which ends with the filling of great brown stone crocks with mince meat for the whole winter long!

It means that now, when the children go out for a day, Jack builds a fire around which the lunch is eaten; that all the trees which are to lose their leaves make a carnival of their last days, a very riot of color to acclaim the close of their season's reign. Everything young on the farm knows that the first days of frost are the best days of all. Young horses and cows no longer are content lazily to nip the short grass, or loaf in the shade of trees; they rush about the pastures at the least excuse, or no excuse at all,

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flinging their funny, stiff, crooked little legs in frolic. The melancholy days? The saddest of the year? Not for youth!

On one nutting excursion Jack and Miss Bolton went with the boys and the Twins, because the children could not have a fire unless a grown-up was along to see that the dry leaves did not spread the fire to the forest. A fire the children were determined to have. They had played every kind of Indian game except a war dance; and while not being certain of the ceremony of Indians upon such occasions, they felt that no properly frenzied war dance could be brought off unless it were danced around a fire.

“Besides,” suggested Len, an authority on such questions, “we may capture an Algonquin or a Huron and want to put him to the torture at the stake. That will need fire.”

The mere suggestion of this filled Sally with enthusiasm. She even hinted that they might shoot a squirrel, and while cooking it for lunch they could play they were roasting a hated foe. As Sally said this she chanced to glance at a cat which accompanied Cathy. This was an extraordinary cat. It liked to follow Cathy as well

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as Towser liked to follow Orrey; it would walk with her in her play, sometimes hiding in the brush and making sudden darts into the ranks of the children. When it was tired it would perch on Cathy's shoulder, where Cathy talked to it more even than she did to the children, because, as she explained, it was more poetical, and understood her moods better. But the glance which Sally, by the merest chance, gave to the cat when she spoke of roasting an animal, pretending it was a red-skinned enemy, made Cathy grab the cat, which was not out of her arms during the rest of the day.

Jack said that he and Miss Bolton would build the fire near the edge of the wood where the nut trees grew, and the children were to go in and see how many nuts they could gather before he should call them.

"And you needn't hurry," he said as they made off. "You needn't come until I call."

"But you call when lunch is ready," Orrey demanded.

Jack built a bright fire of hard-wood branches; and then, spreading a rug at the foot of a tree, asked Miss Bolton to sit there, because he wanted

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to say something to her, and he could say it best lying at her feet where he could watch the fire-light dance in her eyes.

I do not pretend to know what he said; but whatever it was—or, possibly, it may have been only the fire—made her cheeks take on the loveliest color you ever saw. I think, anyway, they talked of something which interested them, for they forgot all about the lunch until Sally dashed out of the woods and demanded to know when they were to be called.

“We’re so starved that we would eat a captive if we had one,” she declared.

Miss Bolton hastily got out the simple provisions of jam sandwiches, mince pies, cakes, preserves, and doughnuts Mrs. Hulburt had stocked the basket with, while Jack called in the hungry nut gatherers. As Cathy came in, hugging her cat, she looked at Miss Bolton with sudden interest, and then that peculiar child looked at Jack. Then she said to herself:

“Hum! I know,” and hugged her cat all the closer.

It was after they were back at the house, and the children were alone, that Cathy disclosed

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what she thought she knew. Gathering the others close about her she said with an air of deep importance:

“I know a secret.”

“You always know secrets,” Len remarked. “What is it now: a fairy in the old mill or a witch in the Deacon’s spring house? It’s always something like that.”

The truth is that Cathy had the faculty of seeing witches and fairies her playfellows never saw, but she could make them believe in her wonderful discoveries. This time it was a matter more real, though none the less interesting.

“Jack and Miss Marion are in love together,” she whispered.

“Pooh!” exclaimed Orrey, uncomfortably. “Love is nonsense—except for your blood kin.”

“It isn’t nonsense!” declared Cathy. “And I saw it in her eyes, and I saw it in his eyes.”

Len snorted at this. “You saw it in your own eyes, silly!” he said.

“I am not a silly; and love isn’t silly, for it’s in all kinds of books; and you are a disagreeable little boy; and I won’t play with you any more,” replied Cathy severely.

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“ Well, then,” asked Orrey, to whom the subject did not seem as foolish as it did to Len. “ How do you mean, ‘ In their eyes ’ ? ”

“ Oh, I know,” said Cathy wisely. “ But if I knew that you were going to ask me what love is I wouldn’t have told you my secret at all. Even the books don’t tell *what* it is: they say it *is*, and that’s enough. Come, Sally, let’s go home.”

“ Let me swing your cat by the tail, and I’ll go,” replied Sally, glad to get away from a subject which she feared would reduce Cathy to verse making.

Although Orrey did not make much of Cathy’s secret when she told him—for, while an interesting, it was an unprofitable subject—he remembered it well the next day when he saw Marion’s stepfather on the porch of the village inn. Orrey and Len were on their way to the store to buy some football articles, and naturally much interested in their errand, when, in passing the inn, Orrey chanced to look up and see Mr. Marvin. He stopped short, spread his legs, and stared at Mr. Marvin in a manner which, I am sorry to say,

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was not polite. In fact, it was an insolent stare; for he had taken a deep dislike to the man, and thought it would not be courageous to pass him and not show his honest feelings.

The man scowled down at the boy, and after a moment said: "Well, you brat, you don't seem pleased to see me."

"No, I am not," Orrey replied slowly. "And if you are here to make Miss Marion cry again, I'll—I'll——"

"Well, what will you do?"

"You never mind what I'll do. But we'll do it—won't we, Len?"

Len, delighted to be brought into such an exciting encounter, said between his shut teeth: "You bet you we will!"

The man glared at the boys and growled: "Run along, you, or I'll cuff your ears."

"No," responded Orrey, "you won't cuff my ears; but we'll go on because——"

He paused to let Len finish the sentence. "Because," said Len, "we have some respectable business to attend to."

Mr. Marvin, who seemed to be waiting for some one whose coming he was impatient for,

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turned on his heel. The boys proceeded on the errand, which soon engrossed their whole thoughts.

While they were debating over ear guards, shin protectors, and other essentials of football, I may as well explain why Mr. Marvin was again in Beaver Creek City.

In the course of the week following their interview, Squire Hulburt wrote to Mr. Marvin a letter in which he said that, after examining his conscience, he could not see that it was his duty to urge Miss Bolton to return to her stepfather's home. "To do so," he wrote, "would be to admit that the home I offer her is not a proper one. In her circumstances it seems to me to be quite right for the young lady to remain here. Her position here is in no respect that of a dependent, for she will more than earn the salary she will receive; and the pleasure my wife derives from her society is more than compensation for the home we are glad to offer her. She is, I think, justified in choosing to earn her own living, in view of your failure to make her an allowance from the income of her estate. Did you make her such an allowance, my opinion might alter.

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At present I shall not speak to her of your urgency that she make your home hers."

The Squire did not speak of another consideration which weighed with both him and Mrs. Hulburt: the fact that they believed Jack to be in love with Marion. They did not know how the matter stood in her heart; but they would have been pleased to have Jack marry before he went to New York to live, and they knew no one they would rather have him wed than Marion.

But there was a danger in the situation which they did not understand: Marion's exaggerated sense of her duty to her stepfather. Had he, on his other visit, commanded his stepdaughter to return, she would have obeyed; but he wanted to appear in the position of offering her a home after she had been turned back by the Squire from her purpose of earning her own living. Jack Hulburt had discovered this trait in the young woman's character; he knew that if Mr. Marvin made it a direct question of obedience or disobedience, her idea of her duty would win for the stepfather.

Therefore it was that Jack had urged some-

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thing to Marion which made her eyes look so eloquent to the observant Cathy. Marion had not said just the word Jack wanted to hear, but she had not left him hopeless.

Now we can return to the store, where the boys watched with eager eyes the last of their purchases sent to the bank for the Squire to carry home in his buggy. The boys were going to walk home as part of their training for the football games.

As they passed the inn, they looked to see if their enemy was still on the porch. They did not see him there, but, casting his eyes higher, Orrey stopped, clutched Len's arm, and pointed to a window of the second story. There they saw Miss Bolton with Mr. Marvin, and he seemed to be talking to her seriously, if not angrily. The boys went on out of view from the window, to consider this development.

"Len," said Orrey, "I wish Cathy were here. I believe she has a sort of magic to tell her what it means when such things are going on."

"That's so," admitted Len, and then asked: "What sort of things *are* going on?"

Orrey remembered that Len did not have all

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his lights on the situation, and explained: "I heard grandmamma and grandpa talking about this man, and they said that if he let Marion alone, Jack might marry her. That would be something to make Cathy sit up, I guess."

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Len. "What can we do? We might set the inn on fire, and rescue her."

"Yes," assented Orrey, "but grandpa would have to pay for the inn. I wish Jack were here."

"It wouldn't take him long to get here—in the machine."

"Goody-good!" cried Orrey. "Let's 'phone."

They did so, and at the first hint of what was happening, Jack answered: "Keep track of them. I'll beat the record coming in."

CHAPTER XIX

THE ELOPEMENT

IT was easy for Orrey and Len to keep an eye on the inn by stepping into the bookstore across the street and pretending to look at books. Fast as they knew the machine could travel, it seemed an age before any sign of it was seen or heard.

“Another breakdown, I’ll bet,” sighed Len.

“And us not there to help repair it,” lamented Orrey.

Soon there was reason for real alarm: Mr. Marvin came out and spoke to the handy man about the inn, who went to the stable in the rear.

“If he drives away with her, what shall we do?” groaned Orrey.

“One of us watch which way he goes, the other watch for Jack. He can’t be going to the station, or he’d take the ’bus.”

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“ Unless he wanted to fool anyone who might be watching him,” said Orrey, who had a suspicion that Mr. Marvin knew that they were watching him.

A buggy was brought around to the front of the inn, and Mr. Marvin and Marion came out to the porch, but just as they started to enter the vehicle Jack came honking down the street. He saw them, stopped the machine, and ran to them.

Marion started toward him at first, but then shrank back.

“ You are not going away, Miss Bolton? ” he asked, ignoring the man.

“ Yes,” she answered.

“ Without saying good-by to uncle or aunt—to the children? ”

“ I—I think it best that way.”

“ My daughter preferred to start at once when she saw that it was right for her to go,” said the stepfather. “ She naturally wishes to avoid any painful scene—such as you seem determined to thrust upon her now.”

Jack glared at the man savagely, but did not speak to him.

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“Of course, Miss Bolton, if you are going of your own free will——”

“Nonsense!” interrupted the man. “A young woman’s father, who is also her legal guardian, can’t abduct her. But there’s no reason why I should. Miss Bolton prefers not to be subjected to impertinent questioning.”

“That will do!” said Jack in a voice which made the man start back. “I wish to hear the young lady say for herself that she is going freely.”

“Mr. Hulburt,” exclaimed Marion, “I am sorry to go—tell them that, all of them—but I go because I feel that it is my duty to do so.”

“Then good-by,” said Jack, his manner suddenly changing.

She took his hand and they parted calmly; too calmly to suit the watching boys.

Marion and her stepfather now entered the ’bus, which was waiting to take passengers to the train, and Jack returned to his automobile. He looked about as soon as the ’bus was out of sight, as if he expected to see the boys, and they ran to him.

“Oh, Jack!” said Orrey, almost in tears. “I

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hoped you wouldn't let her go. Cathy says you love her!"

"Let her go, you little goose!" answered Jack. "Haven't I been teaching you a fake pass with the ball to fool the other side? I've just made a fake pass to fool that rascally step-father. Jump in here; I need you both."

Mr. Marvin had indeed discovered that Orrey and Len were observing his movements, and, being a man who disliked observation of any kind, he had intended to drive from the inn in a direction opposite from the station and reach it by a roundabout way; but when he saw Jack and Marion say good-by indifferently, he believed there was no danger of further appeal to her, and took the 'bus to the station, assured that the young lady would accompany him quietly, and without interference by any of the Farm people.

When Jack had the boys in the automobile he said:

"Now, kiddies, there is a saying that all's fair in love, which means that it will be all right for you to help me now, even if I ask you to do something which would not seem quite fair if

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we did not have an underhand rogue to deal with."

The boys did not quite understand what Jack had in mind, but agreed that anything they could do to prevent the departure of Marion with the disagreeable man who had threatened to cuff their ears must be all right.

"You, Orrey," continued Jack, "go to the station and say good-by to Marion. Try to get her to the carriage platform, at the back. You, Len, stand where you can see if Orrey succeeds; when Miss Bolton is close to the back door, signal me, and I'll do the rest."

The boys walked down to the station. Orrey entered it; Len stood outside, where he could see Jack, although a person on the platform could not see him. I declare that Orville Hulburt is as honest and straightforward a lad as I ever knew, and he had never developed any talent for deception—or, as I prefer to call it in this case, for acting; but great and unexpected demands upon even the least clever of us sometimes develop unexpected capacity.

The railway station at Beaver Creek is arranged like hundreds of others at places of such

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size. On each side of the ticket booth is a waiting-room, with a door opening on one side to the track platform, on the other to the carriage platform, where the 'bus takes on and lets off passengers. Orrey lounged up to the back platform door, saw Marion and her stepfather inside, the latter buying tickets and Marion seated, looking far from happy. She saw Orrey enter, and as she did so that usually honest boy began a most deceitful snivelling, and carried his arm to his eyes as if to hide his tears.

"Aren't you going to say good-by to me?" he asked in an anguished voice.

Marion hurried to his side, and as she did so he shuffled nearer the door he had entered. Her movements drew the attention of her stepfather, who, seeing Orrey, said crossly:

"Hurry up with your parting from that brat; I hear the train coming."

Marion threw her arms around the boy's neck, saying:

"Good-by, dear. Say good-by to Lensie and the Twins for me."

Orrey seemed unable to let her go, now that he had his arms around her, too, and shuffled

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and twisted her nearer the door, so that she was forced to follow his awkward movements. At last Len, from the outside, saw them quite in the doorway, and he gave a signal.

What happened then was so fast and exciting that it was not until some time afterwards the boys made it all out in its proper sequence. The automobile jumped forward from its hiding place as if it had started on a hundred-mile race, but stopped with a shock right at the door; with the momentum of the machine Jack was out on the platform, his arm around Marion; she was lifted off her feet, planted in the automobile by the side of Jack, and with a plunge and a snort the machine went flying down the road as if it had made no stop at all.

You can be sure that this was not done silently; the machine made all the noises it was capable of in resentment at such a sudden stop and start, and Mr. Marvin was attracted by the racket. Seeing Marion's skirts flying behind her as Jack all but tossed her into her seat, Mr. Marvin dashed to the back platform only to catch a glimpse of the machine disappearing to the north at the rate of something like a mile a

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minute. The man said something which I cannot repeat, and then, in his helpless rage, caught sight of Orrey and Len, themselves almost as dazed as he, and gazing with wide-open eyes after the cloud of dust which alone marked the direction of the elopement. The man dashed at the boys savagely, and before they could dodge had boxed their ears "good," as Len afterwards described the quality of his blows.

They darted to a safe distance and considered events in a council of war.

"Should we do something to avenge our wrongs?" asked Orrey, shaking his fists at the man, who was shaking his at them and still using language not to be reported.

"Well," said Len, "it seems to me that we've done *something* already. There's no good sense in making a charge when you don't have to make it—unless you have the best troops."

This thought—that they had had their revenge in advance, so to say—seemed good to Orrey. He called out to the man: "You boxed our ears, but we spoiled your plan. Wanted to marry her to a rich old man you owe a lot of money to, didn't you? Yaa!"

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This revelation of Orrey's knowledge made the man dance with rage, and he would have pursued his tormentors had not the train rolled into the station at that moment. He boarded the train, glaring back at the grinning boys, and that was the last seen of him in the neighborhood of Beaver Creek.

"What was that about his wanting to marry Miss Marion to an old man?" asked Len.

"Blessed if I know," Orrey admitted. "I heard something grandmamma and grandpa said about it. They haven't had kiddies in the house for so long a time that they forget what papa and mamma are always saying when I'm around, about little pitchers having big ears. I heard them saying something about Marion and a bad old man, and I remembered it when I was thinking what a crack on the ears we got. It made me so mad I remembered what I'd forgot."

"I guess," observed Len, "that's the reason we get a crack on the ears when we forget our lessons: to make us remember. Jiminy! Haven't we got a story to tell at our homes—Jack and Marion run away!"

It was, indeed, a story; and Orrey, before they

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parted, made Len promise to stop at the Twins' on his way home and tell them.

"You see," he said, "the Twins, being girls, have a lot of curiosity about a thing like this. Remember Cathy telling us the other day about Marion and Jack being in love with each other? I tell you, Cathy knows something even if she does like cats and write poetry."

Filled with the importance of his message, Orrey raced up the driveway to the house, made a football plunge into the sitting room, where sat the Squire and his wife, and shouted in one word:

"Jack and Marion eloped!"

"Good!" shouted the Squire, jumping to his feet. Orrey had never heard him speak so loud, never saw him move so quick nor get so red, so he felt that his announcement was made with proper dramatic effect. Mrs. Hulburt did not say a word then; but seeing that the Squire was pleased, she smiled, and listened with breathless interest as Orrey told the story over and over, with every detail, including the cuffing he and Len received, and his retort about defeating the wicked schemes of the stepfather. Even when

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they went in to dinner he had to repeat some of the details, as Mrs. Hulburt smiled through her tears and the Squire repeated: "Good boy, Jack! He deserves the girl."

They returned to the sitting room and were quieted down somewhat when Mrs. Hulburt suddenly had a thought which rekindled the excitement. "Cyrus Hulburt!" she exclaimed.

"Well, well, Dorothy, what is it?" the Squire asked, surprised at her unusual excitement.

"Goodness gracious! Cyrus, Marion hasn't a thing to wear. Where *do* you suppose they have gone to?"

"Gone to Hunsden Center, of course."

"Why of course?"

"They went north; that is the nearest town with a good hotel and jewelry store; Jack has a college friend there, and he knows the minister, Dr. Harkness."

"That's so," Mrs. Hulburt said, following the other's reasoning closely. "Your law studies did you some good after all." She was silent a little, and then, after a glance at her husband, said: "Come, Orville, you must go to bed and get a long sleep after all this excitement."

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When she had heard the boy's prayers she returned to the sitting room and said to the Squire: "Have Scudder hitch up the Morgans while I put some things in a bundle."

"What are you going to do?" asked her husband in surprise.

"We are going to Hunsden Center, with something for Marion to wear."

"And give them a proper wedding supper," exclaimed the Squire. "Good!"

CHAPTER XX

A MOONLIGHT EXODUS

IN spite of his fatigue, Orrey's excitement would not let him sleep. He felt that he was going to be lonely with Jack and Marion away. They had joined in much of the plays and games lately, and were jolly companions, and he thought of this until he became a little weepy and wanted to see them very much. He couldn't sleep; he wondered how far it was to Hunsden Center, and what excuse he could make for going there. The house was very quiet, and he thought his grandparents had gone to bed, early as it was. He went to the window, and, looking out, saw that the night was made for just such an excursion as he had in mind; then he remembered what his grandmother had said about Marion having nothing to wear, and wondered if it were not his duty to take her something.

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He might drive over to Hunsden Center, but he knew that if he stole out of the house and asked Scudder for a horse, he would be bundled back into bed for his pains. Then he went softly into Marion's room, looked about, saw the old-fashioned gown she wore on the night of the party; and remembering what a pretty picture she made, how all the women admired her, it struck him that it was just the thing for a wedding dress. His mind was made up. He folded the gown, wrapped papers around it, dressed himself, and, carrying the bundle, crept out of the house.

He knew a cut-off to the north road; but it followed a narrow valley which would be dark and mysterious at night, and he debated whether there was anything in Cathy's discovery of a witch in the deacon's spring house. He would have to pass that spring house on the cut-off.

But it meant a saving of a mile, so he plunged into the road, whistling "Yankee Doodle" as loud as he could, as being the tune best calculated to frighten any evil thing in such a good American country. But there were strange things to be seen and heard in the woods. No

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doubt about that. The trees, half stripped of their leaves, revealed objects among the branches nobody suspected were there when the leaves were full—the nests of big birds, perhaps, he thought to himself hopefully. As to the noises, they were numerous, tormentingly strange, and actually had a suggestion of creeping, signaling Indians. He recalled that Len had his own doubts as to the total disappearance of savage Indians from these parts.

On one side of the road where he walked was a field fenced off by pine-tree roots, a kind of fence peculiar to the neighborhood, and which Orrey had much admired by daylight; but now, in moonlight, they were miserably suggestive of pictures by an artist he hated, named Doré. The roots looked like tortured people flinging arms about in a way no healthy boy likes to see; uncanny suggestions of animals unlike any beast Orrey was acquainted with—or wished to be. Really, this cut-off began to seem longer than the main road; and so beastly narrow the moon could get into it only in splashes which were worse than no moonlight at all.

Now, what the deuce was *that*!

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Orrey thought he heard a new noise and stopped whistling to make sure. Yes, a rumbling and something else. A whistle! But what tune was that? "Yankee Doodle!" if ever that inspired tune was whistled.

He faced the sound; saw first a horse and buggy, then as it drew near and passed through one of the splashes of light he saw—who but old Len, sitting tight on the edge of the very middle of the seat, with cheeks distended in the ardor of whistling.

"Len!" screamed Orrey, so glad to see him that he danced in the road.

The horse was pulled back on its haunches. "Who's that?" demanded Len hoarsely.

"Orrey, you old duffer you. Drive on and pick me up."

They had driven out of the valley and into the broader and lighter north road and talked of many things before Orrey asked, "What are *you* going over to Hunsden Center for?"

"It's like this," explained Len; "when I got home ma nearly had a fit hearing about the elopement. You'd think somebody had eloped with her, to hear her carry on. Then, after she'd

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made me tell the whole story over about a million times, she all of a sudden had another fit. 'That poor child hasn't a thing to wear,' she says.

"The more she thought of it the more of a pity she thought it was. She says it was no more than the duty of a friend to send her some things to wear. But who was to take them? Pa was over in Rutland on jury duty; grandpa had the rheumatism; ma couldn't go because the baby had the whoops; and the hired men were too tired to get out of bed, where every blessed one of them was.

"So ma thought and thought, and at last she said: 'Lensie, are you afraid to go? You can drive the old mare, who knows the road, for she carried a load of greenings over to the store there only last week. All you'll have to do is to turn her into the cut-off, and she'll find her way there.' Well, what's a fellow to do when he's asked if he's afraid?"

"Of course," assented Orrey, and began laughing.

"What are you chuckling about?" Len demanded.

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Orrey explained about the contents of his own bundle, and both boys giggled.

"Marion will have enough to wear, anyway," Len remarked.

Hunsden Center was reached without further adventure. The boys drove to the principal hotel, and, entering the office, knew they were on the right track, for out of a room on the main floor came the hearty voice of the Squire, saying:

"Here's to your happiness, Jack and Marion!"

"Why, there's grandpa!" exclaimed Orrey.
"Wonder how he got here?"

The boys entered the room unannounced and were greeted with shouts of welcome. To their amazement they also found there Mr. and Mrs. Prendle and the Twins. After the first greetings, the bundles of the boys attracted general and curious attention.

"What you got in the bundles, kiddies?" asked Jack, and all listened for the answer which came in chorus:

"Clothes for Marion."

At this there was such a shout of laughter that

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the boys became uncomfortable. They were the kind of boys who could stand any kind of criticism better than laughter, and in their discomfort they shuffled and blushed until Marion ran to them and gave each a kiss.

“You are both little dears,” she said, “and it’s awfully kind of you.”

When she learned what was in Orrey’s bundle she took it and disappeared.

Then the presence of the Twins was explained. Len had told them of the elopement, and they, of course, had flown to their mother with the exciting news. After considering all the circumstances, she declared it was her duty as a Christian woman to see that Marion had some clothes provided for her. “For the poor child hasn’t a thing to wear!” she said. Mr. Prendle, agreeing with his wife’s views, hitched up a team to help her amiable plans; and the Twins had so wanted to go—well, here they were.

Sally’s eyes were afire with excitement, but Cathy looked half sentimental and wholly important, as if she might be contemplating a poem to celebrate the romance.

The Squire and his wife came as we have seen

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they intended, and up to date Marion had received four offerings of something to wear.

When these explanations had been made Marion re-entered the room and, to the delight of everybody, wore the gown Orrey brought, and looked as charming a bride as ever eloped, or was married under usual circumstances. The company also included Jack's friend, who had been best man at the wedding, performed at the parsonage by Dr. Harkness; and while they all waited for the supper, the best man and the Squire alternated in proposing toasts.

"Here's to your next visit to Beaver Creek Farm," the Squire now offered, when Marion returned and had been admired in her old-fashioned gown.

"My next visit?" she said, laughing. "Why, if the Squire and his wife——"

"You mean your uncle and aunt," corrected Mrs. Hulburt.

"If my uncle and aunt," said Marion, coloring prettily, "think they are rid of me as a schoolma'am, they are mistaken. I intend to start that district school term, and keep the school open until a new teacher is found."

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“ Oh, I say! ” pleaded Jack.

“ You have nothing to say about it,” answered Marion, stamping her foot at him, which made him roar with laughter. “ Do you think I would disappoint all the kiddies who expect me to open school? And I want to see how the football games come out.”

“ Right you are! ” exclaimed the Squire, and turned to greet Dr. Harkness who, smiling and carrying a bundle, entered the room.

At the sight of the bundle there was a silence which was almost painful; a silence so strained and unexpected that it plainly embarrassed the good minister, who said, apologetically:

“ I assure you—good evening, Squire—I do not wish to intrude; but the fact is—well, when my good wife understood the circumstances—the suddenness—she said to me that if the young lady would not consider it obtrusive—that is, I’ve come with a parcel of a few necessary garments.”

The explosion could not be held off longer. There is no doubt that Sally started it. There came from her a low, choking gurgle, then uncontrollable shrieks of laughter, and the

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others followed, to the amazement of Dr. Harkness.

The Squire, even before he could command his voice, gently pushed the minister into a chair and patted his back.

"It's all right, parson," he said at last. "Let me explain a few things, and you'll understand."

The minister recovered his spirits when the situation was explained, and he accepted the Squire's invitation to bring his good wife in to supper; so at last Jack and Marion had quite a party at their wedding feast.

When the company were preparing to return to their various homes, Cathy, after several attempts to speak, said timidly:

"Miss Marion—I mean Mrs. Jack—didn't you love him that day?"

"What day, child?" asked Marion, surprised.

"The day I saw it in your eyes, and Jack's; by the fire, when we were chestnutting."

Marion caught Cathy in her arms, saying:

"Of course I did—but I didn't let him know."

"There!" declared Cathy, looking around at Orrey, Len, and Sally in triumph, "there, I told you so!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE GREAT FOOTBALL GAME

MARION kept her word and returned for the football game; but she did not have to return to open the school.

She sent in her place a young woman as unlike herself as she could be and yet be very nice: one who quickly won her way into favor with the folks of Beaver Creek Farm; a brown, big-eyed, jolly little woman who had worked her way through the Normal School by doing everything, as she told Mrs. Hulburt, "from clerking in book stores, to trimming hats, from designing menu cards, to reporting college news for the papers." The Twins fell in love with her at a glance, and she won the adoration of the boys by developing a rampant case of football fever before the school had been open for a week.

It would have been strange if she had escaped

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the fever; every one had it, and as the time for the game drew near not only the whole neighborhood but most of the county people gave themselves up to the delirium of the fever with luxurious abandon. There was reason for this apart from the usual causes for partisan excitement: the Graded School of Beaver Creek City resented the desertion of the paying pupils of the District School, and there was a feeling that by the reopening of the District School the Squire had as good as said that the City School and its scholars were not good enough for the boys and girls of the Farm district. Feeling was turbulent; it fairly boiled and bubbled. The City felt that if the District School team were soundly beaten at football the glory of their school would depart, and the pupils return to the Graded School. Some said that the Squire needed a lesson, too; that he was an autocrat, and was paying out of his own pocket more than the stated salary for a teacher brought up from a high-toned college, and this was a slight on the home-bred teachers.

Well, with these local causes, whose potency to fire the heart no one can understand who has

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not witnessed the jealousy of such a neighborhood, another cause of excitement was projected into the campaign which gave the approaching contest a county importance. This was an offer by letter from Jack to provide a referee for the game in the person of Archie Pope! Would he be acceptable? Would it be acceptable for the County to receive a visit from the President of the United States! Archie Pope was without question the most famous man in the United States, if not in the world; he had won the most renowned game in the history of his college—Jack had played in the game, so its points were known in their last details—won the game for his college, I say, by a brilliant play which earned him undying fame, and drove several thousand partisans into hoarse, chattering insanity. Would *he* be acceptable? Why, the very day after the letter was received, reporters from Rutland, aye from Burlington, called at the Farm asking about it. Orrey and Len gave the reporters copies of the letter, and the lineup of their team, and soon saw their own, their very *own*, names printed in the papers. This seemed to the boys incredibly good,

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though Grandmamma Hulbert had misgivings as to this early fame and publicity for the boys.

Now it was seen that more than slight provisions for a crowd would have to be made, so the Squire ordered a sheep pasture well rolled, and it was properly gridironed by Scudder, working under Orrey's and Len's instructions, and the Squire even had some benches built on each side of the field for spectators.

All this time the District team was hard at work under Alex Converse who had succeeded Jack as coach. Alex, who had played on the Burlington team and knew the game, was a clerk in the Squire's bank, and so could get away from work, to coach. He brought the team into such good shape that they won more games than they lost with other District teams, but all knew that the great game with the Graded School would be harder than any they had so far played.

Even Cathy got the fever. When she heard that a new set of signals were to be used for the great game she invented a code which was found to be in rhyme, and while her poetry was not

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available as signals it was beautifully adapted for side-line songs when set to popular music by the new teacher. When Alex Converse was not on hand Sally ran the team through the signals, and in one way and another everyone in the school, boys, girls and teacher, not forgetting Towser, was involved in the preparations. That knowing dog, Towser, would stroll along the side lines when the eleven were playing with the scrubs—farm lads, graduates of the school—and, with ears cocked knowingly, studied the plays until he had as good a notion of the game as have most spectators. He was observed several times violently to wag his tail when he saw that what Orrey was trying to do was done. As to Scudder, he went about muttering rules of the game, having set himself the awful task of learning them from a printed copy Orrey gave him; and he even debated the propriety of wearing his new clothes on the eventful day. He was much excited about the coming of Archie Pope, because, excepting a candidate for Congress (who was defeated), Scudder had never seen a national hero, and the prospect of seeing the greatest living one, of being associated with him,

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in a way, thrilled his waking hours and gilded his dreams.

At last, in company with Jack and Marion, Pope arrived, and was driven from the station to the Farm by Scudder, who was speechless with the excitement and the wonder of finding the hero a young man who laughed and blushed easily, and hid all appearance of greatness in an interest in ordinary things, the Morgans, the state of the weather and—this nearly floored Scudder—the prospect of the good things to eat which Jack had promised they would have when they reached the Farm. That was Friday afternoon, and the team was to be put through final practice under Jack's coaching. Len was invited to the Farm to lunch and to meet the great man, and he made a little speech when he was introduced (Cathy wrote it, and Orrey had rehearsed him in it) but his greatest triumph came when Jack called Mr. Pope's attention to Len's refusal to eat a second piece of pie, and the great man said, as affably as possible, "Well done, Severance! Why, I'd break training any day for a second piece of this pie, and as for a third piece, I'd break an engagement with the dentist."

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Then, indeed, Len felt the reward of his Spartan self-denial.

The morning of the game dawned bright and cool, for which prayers of thanks were returned, for in that country it can snow in early November with the greatest ease. A perfect football day, and it had its effect on the size of the crowd. People came from the ends of the county; the neighborhood turned out to a man, woman, and child, of course, and by noon a hundred wagons had deposited loads of spectators who were eating lunches about the field, for the game was to begin early for the benefit of those who had trains to catch. Jack had the team out early for the last signal polishing, and then took them all into the house to see some new parlor magic he had brought along. This was to ease up the mental tension which had reached a state when a break of some kind was threatened, if skillful preventives were not applied. The Graded School team arrived in a band wagon, followed by fellow pupils on foot, with flags, horns, badges, and all the imposing appendages befitting such an event. Aside from the players there were only about a dozen scholars in the

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District School, but these, with some graduates, marshalled, led and inspired by Sally, made a prodigious noise, and never flagged in enthusiasm from the first appearance of their team to the final whistle.

Who is to tell the story of that game? Not this present chronicler; and until the neighborhood develops its epic poet none shall do it justice. There were matrons enough present to fill all the benches, but no more seats were required, for no man or child there but surged up and down the lines in noisy excitement during every minute of play. The District had no substitutes, for the boys not in uniform were younger than Orrey and Len, and it was even thought that the latter two would be the weak points in the game, for they were younger than the youngest of the opposition. Sally, to be sure, assured Jack that if any of "our men" were disabled she herself would go into the game. When Pope walked out on the field and called the rival captains and coaches to him for that mysterious preliminary talk, the spectators gazed at him with an interest which drove even thoughts of a polite welcome out of their minds

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until the new teacher told Sally to give Pope the school cheer. This she did; then the Graded school cheer followed, other spectators clapped their hands, and the great man laughingly raised his cap and bowed. Then the reporters went up boldly to him while the spectators wondered at their temerity, asked some questions which he answered good-naturedly, and all agreed that for a very great hero he was a most gracious person. At last Pope said to the two coaches: "Better bring those kids out; they'll get rattled if they're kept in their uniforms too long without action." Then followed the preliminary warming up to the accompaniment of piping cheers, and at this, Towser, on a leash held by Marion began to show a peculiar interest. He searched out Orrey with his calm, brown eyes and watched him intently. If he already had any dogly inkling of his famous part in the game he gave no sign of it.

Scudder heard compliments on the brightness and regularity of his whitewash lines, but he did not heed them. He was more excited—he acknowledged the fact to himself—than ever before in his life except in his battle with the

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kidnappers, for it seemed to him that he simply couldn't stand it to see Orrey's side lose, yet he couldn't see how they were to win against bigger players. Pope had spoken to him several times, to the increase of his excitement, and now gave him his sweater to hold in the most friendly manner. But why attempt to translate to cold type the varying emotions which overflow from the heart to the vocal chords on such an occasion? The game has to begin, and at last the kick-off put the ball into play.

At the end of the first half the score stood five points in favor of the graded school team, and the exultantly shrill cries of their partisans echoed from the hills. After Jack had seen that Alex and Scudder were giving such attention to his boys in their dressing tent, as they needed, he went to the opponents' coach, a butcher in the town, who had bet on his team with confident liberality, and said to him, "See here, Baxter, your side made most of their gains by the kind of play we ought not to have in a game like this."

"Didn't hear the referee make any kick," replied Baxter with a grin.

"The referee doesn't know as well as I do

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what kind of advice you've given your players in a game you've bet on," said Jack, "and he's not looking for rough work as closely as I am."

"Oh, we ain't playing checkers," suggested Baxter.

"No," admitted Jack. "But we are playing football; and I've noticed that all the rough work has been done by certain of your players just after you've spoken or signaled to them. I want you to know that I'm watching, that's all."

Baxter shrugged his shoulders and walked away: but he seemed to heed Jack's warning, for a time at least, because there was no further scoring until the second half was drawing to a close, when the Districts gained two points by a safety they forced their opponents to make. Then Sally led a wild cry for a touchdown—just one—

"Oh, give us a touchdown, fellows!

A touchdown, brave boys, just one!"

for that would put the Districts ahead.

After the kick from safety the farmer lads rushed the ball down the field again, and were making good gains until they lost the ball fol-

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lowing some rough work; and then one of the District boys limped painfully, and looked appealingly at the referee, who only shook his head, as if answering that he had seen nothing to warrant exercise of his authority. But Jack went to Mr. Pope and said:

“ Archie, that boy failed to hold the ball because he'd got the knee, and was in such pain that he——”

“ I didn't see anything, Jack,” interrupted Pope, but he added, “ he looked like a player who'd been injured, I'll admit, but I saw nothing—my view was obstructed.”

Baxter nodded approval to the big boy who had done his rough work so skillfully as not to be discovered, although they knew the referee was on the lookout. The ball was regained when there was less than three minutes left of the half, and with the Districts twenty yards from the goal. Orrey began the play which sent his partisans into hysterics by a run which was stopped only when he was thrown not five feet from the goal.

Towser was whining and pulling at his leash. “ Better let me take him,” Scudder said, going to

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where Marion held the dog, unconscious of his nervousness in her own. She yielded the leash and Scudder walked around behind the crowd to the space just back of the enemy's goal. No one seemed to notice him.

It was through the center or nothing, now, and Orrey, because of his light weight and quickness, was sent in to go through or under or over where the whole desperate force of his side was boring for glory and victory. It wasn't much of a hole, but the line in front wavered and bent back, and Orrey squirmed into it with a knowledge somewhere in his whirling brain that the goal was less than his own length away. Hugging the precious ball, bent nearly double but not quite down, he felt a comfortable something under an arm pit ramming him forward—that was Len's head—next he nearly lost consciousness and did lose all his breath because of a kick in his side; and then—oh, most wonderful!—he felt himself pulled ahead, but how he did not know. Then came the last frantic increase of the shouts from his side when it seemed that there could be no increase, and he hoped he'd made a touchdown. Then he didn't know any-

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thing else until the pile of bodies over him being slowly untangled and removed he heard Pope say the blessed word "Touchdown," and a few seconds later heard the final whistle sound. Then he was on top of Jack's shoulders, the school children dervishing around him with frantic shrieks of victory.

"That's a pretty intelligent dog," Pope said to Scudder, finding him and Towser on one side of the field as the crowd was breaking up.

"Yes, sir: knows 'most as much as most folks and quite a lot more than some."

"And that's a stout little jacket Orrey wore, wasn't it?"

"Stouter than most of 'em," Scudder replied. "His father had it made special for him down in York."

Mr. Pope eyed Scudder for a few seconds as if disposed to say something more, and Scudder waited without a wink for what he might say, but the great man turned away without another word, and Scudder patted Towser's head affectionately.

When Scudder went around the field to the space behind the enemy's goal, he talked to

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Towser, who listened attentively while keeping his eyes on Orrey. They were not more than three feet away when Orrey was squirming for those last few inches, and although only the point of one of the boy's shoulders was in sight through the snarl of players the dog recognized it. Scudder saw Orrey kicked, saw him collapse—then he slipped the leash, and Towser darted forward like a flash and fastened his teeth in Orrey's jacket, over a shoulder. "Come away, you rascal!" shouted Scudder loudly, and he took hold of Towser's hind legs and pulled until the hound became a taut hawser between the stout jacket and Scudder's powerful arms. Then Scudder quickly commanded the dog to loose his grip, the dog obeyed, and they strolled quietly away. The whole action took less than a couple of seconds, and in the general frenzy no one seemed to realize that anything had happened except that Scudder had prevented the dog from mixing up in the game.

But Mr. Pope saw what really did happen. He was a conscientious man: he had seen a Graded School player, after a signal from Baxter, kick Orrey in a manner which should have

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stopped that young gentleman's progress over the goal lines; so he debated whether he should deny the touchdown because of the help he had seen Towser, plus Scudder, give Orrey. He concluded that if Orrey had not been kicked he would have squirmed the ball across the line without Towser's help, so the help was merely a set-off. This satisfied his conscience; yet it was a comfort to him, that, besides himself, only the dog and one man knew the whole story, and that the man was just as likely to tell the story as was the dog.

CHAPTER XXII

CLOSING EXERCISES

SNOW fell soon after the great football game, and then Scudder told Orrey and Len that he guessed it was about time to go out with the guns Orrey's father had sent the boys as a reward for their efforts in the game. Nothing that had happened since their chumship began so pleased the boys: to shoot a gun is naturally and properly the ambition of every healthy boy, and to shoot it at fair game is the height of that ambition; and now the snow promised a rabbit hunt.

“Towser isn't what you'd call a rabbit dog,” explained Scudder, “but that doesn't make any difference to Towser, for he doesn't know that he isn't a rabbit dog, so he just goes about it like he was bred and trained for the work. I reckon that's because he's a Yankee dog. The Yankees,

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in that little difference the Squire tells about, weren't bred nor trained for soldiers, but nobody they had confidence in told 'em so, and they just naturally went out and fit like they'd been soldiering all their lives. They didn't know they weren't soldier men, so it made no difference—except to the fellows they fit with.”

Towser's possible shortcomings did not trouble the boys so much as the gun Scudder brought forth for his own use. Neither lad had ever seen a gun loaded at the muzzle, and they had doubt if Scudder's gun could be fired, so peculiar and hidden was the manner of its loading.

“That's correct,” admitted Scudder. “This gun isn't like the ones everybody has these days, but I can't get rid of a notion that it'll shoot straight because that's the way she's shot for me and pa and grandpa. Had a most singular thing happen with this gun once: there was a horned owl which, as everybody knows, has an appetite for chicken which is nothing less than a sin—in an owl. Well, one day that owl was fast asleep on a limb of a tree dreaming about two or three helpings of chicken he'd had without so much as saying, ‘Thank you, ma'am,’ the evening before,

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and I chances to see him when I had this old gun along. So I up and I aimed at the owl, but just then he opened his eyes and saw me. Don't you ever believe a man who tells you that owls can't see in the daytime. They can, only they look so wise that folks believe they must be asleep even with their eyes wide open. It comes from judging animals from folks: folks who look uncommon wise mostly can't see an inch beyond their noses—even short noses. Well, I never could abide to shoot anything which was looking at me; it seems too unfriendly. So I walked around the tree, keeping my gun ready to shoot when I should get out of the owl's sight. Maybe you never tried to do that. You'd never believe it unless you saw it, or I told you, that an owl keeps turning its head if anything it wants to see goes around it in a circle, and that owl kept turning and turning its head—like as not curious to see this old gun—until it made me dizzy. But I kept on walking around and around, gun pointed at owl and owl looking at gun. After a spell I noticed the owl's neck getting twisty-tight like a rag when you wring the water out of it, and I said to myself that it must be mighty uncomfortable

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for the owl, but I could stand it if he could, and I kept a-walking around and around that tree until Mr. Owl dropped down at my feet with his neck wrung as slick as a hired man wrings a chicken's neck when the hired girl sends him out to get one for dinner."

With such stories of the hunt the boys started out over the snow which was not deep, but lay in an even blanket of sparkling silver and blue and crimson in sunshine or shadow; and the boys found out that if you only look for them a field of snow will show not only these but many other colors—nearly everything but white.

This is not to be a hunting story, because nothing was killed. Mrs. Hulburt afterwards told the boys that Scudder was never known to kill any bird or beast not listed as a pest or an incurable thief. Rabbits and squirrels he especially disliked to have killed, so the lads had only the fun of a long tramp through the snowy fields and woods, with some practice at targets which Scudder said could be hit without a wish in the heart of the gunner that he had missed.

At about this time the billboards of Beaver Creek City announced the coming of a large and

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brilliant company of metropolitan players in an unrivalled production of the classic and moral drama, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and Orrey got his grandmother's consent to invite Len and the Twins to see the play, Scudder to go along as escort. His young guests had never been to a theatre and were delighted at the prospect, the more so because the Pond having frozen over, Sally, inspired by the billboard pictures, often escaped from the cruel bloodhounds (amiably played by Towser, except that he always caught Sally Eliza) and was pursued by Haley, Andy and Sam, capably played by Orrey, Len and Cathy. Sally, as Eliza, wanted to carry Cathy's cat as a substitute for the child, preferring it to a rag doll, but that discreet animal refused to leave the warm arms of Cathy, and with good sense, too, as the ice was dangerously thin. This taste of the drama made the children eager to see the real metropolitan company of stars, and they were early on hand in front seats with Scudder by their side, and Towser under the seats. Towser was not supposed to be there. He had followed the party in their sleigh ride from the Farm, but being refused admittance

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at the door had found a side entrance which he used easily, as it was a swinging-door such as he opened himself at the Farm when he wanted to enter the kitchen to tell the cook that it was his dinner hour. He scented out his party and crawled under the seats, seeming to threaten no trouble. The metropolitan company appeared to have lost some of its members, for many parts were played by each actor (only Orrey discovered this) but the children were entranced by the acting from the first. Towser, however, began soon to be restless, and tried to crawl out of his hiding place until Orrey placed both feet on him and held him down. What had aroused his interest was soon apparent to all; the distant baying of hounds was heard, and then Towser whined and struggled until Orrey reached down and held him by his collar. He wished Scudder's strong hand was in charge of the dog, but Scudder in open-mouthed rapture was unmindful of all but the stirring events on the stage. Then came the great scene, the escape and pursuit of Eliza. Cathy was panting with excitement, and whispering the lines out of the book:

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“The huge green fragment of ice on which she alighted pitched and creaked as her weight came upon it, but she stayed there but a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy she leaped to another and still another cake—stumbling—leaping—slipping—springing upward again.”

Now for the dogs! Cathy, of course, knew of the dogs only from the billboard pictures, as they were thoughtlessly left out of the book account of the escape, and she was trembling for Eliza who, instead of continuing her flight over the wobbly blocks of stage ice, stood unsteadily on one in the very center of the stage, looking over her shoulder with anguished eyes while Haley was arranging the leash of the dogs to hold them, straining and yelping, as Eliza rocked perilously on her ice refuge. Cathy gasped and caught at Orrey who turned to see what her troubles were and forgot for a moment—a fatal moment—about Towser. That usually calm animal was as excited as Cathy; wondering, no doubt—for he had not yet seen the stage—what all the barking was about, and wanting to take a paw in the affair if it deserved a dog’s atten-

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tion. Feeling Orrey's hand leave his collar, Towser rose, took one look at the stage, then bounded over the amazed orchestra (composed of a pianist, who had earlier taken in the tickets at the door) and was fairly on the stage. Now his duty was clear: here was a lady in distress pursued by two evil-looking dogs, and Towser hesitated not a second. Haley, seeing a new and strange dog in the cast, loosed the leash and fled, and the stage dogs sprang forward in answer to Towser's challenge. For a moment the audience supposed this was a new and delightful surprise in dramatic realism, and cheered wildly as Eliza, dropping her rag baby, scurried as well as she could over the ice to the sheltering wings. Haley and two or three other players appeared and began to shower blows on Towser. This brought more complications: Scudder rose and called out loudly:

"Hey! you fellows leave that dog alone. There's two against him already."

This gave the audience a real idea of what was going on, and at once there was an uproar; women screamed and men demanded that all keep their seats, themselves, however, crowding

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forward to see the dog fight—better to them than any play acting.

Orrey, at the sight of Towser's first stage appearance, was convulsed with laughter, but seeing his faithful friend attacked by unequal odds, he, too, climbed over the piano and dashed into the thick of the battle, running between the blocks of ice. Scudder sprang after him, and as Orrey held Towser Scudder re-leashed the stage dogs and pulled them back. At this point some one gave the signal to lower the curtain, and in a moment more the intruders found themselves shut off from the audience and surrounded by angry and threatening actors. The most threatening of all was Little Eva, who loudly demanded that the intruders be turned over to the police, asserting indignantly, that in twenty years' experience on the stage she had never been so affronted and frightened. Scudder found the man in charge and explained matters a little, so that he called off the angry players, telling them that the handsome young gentleman (Orrey) was the grandson of the owner of the hall, who would doubtless remit the rent in consideration of the annoyance the players had suffered; and, any-

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way, the adventure properly advertised in advance of their future appearances, would add to the drawing power of the show. Little Eva, having caught Orrey's name, now smiled sweetly upon him, saying that she would so much like a pointer in Wall Street, and perhaps Orrey might speak to his papa about it. Scudder took Towser to the stables and fastened him there; Orrey returned to his seat, crimson but happy, and the performance went on to the close after a pretty speech by the leading man in which he excused Towser from any malicious intention.

Orrey's parents had fixed the limit of his visit at the closing exercises of the school term, and these exercises came to be looked upon by his young friends in the nature of a good-by to him. While he looked forward with lively satisfaction to his return home, he did not like the notion of parting from his friends; Len, particularly, had become a well-liked chum, and he wondered how he would get along without him. He told Len he should miss him like the dickens in the city, and then Len asked what he had often wanted to:

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“What do fellows do in New York for fun?”

“Well,” replied Orrey after a thoughtful pause, “we don’t exactly have fun like our fun here—no Indians, no Pond, no coasting. Of course there’s a lot of things for grown-ups and girls, but for fellows it’s mostly a beastly bore. There are two good things, though,” he added, as he recalled them. “There’s the Aquarium at the Battery, and the Natural History Museum in the Park. At the museum they have Eskimo—stuffed, you know—with their houses and canoes and weapons and all sorts of corking things. Then there are buffalo—stuffed, of course—but they are walking across the boundless plains inside a glass house with rattlesnakes and prairie dogs as natural as life. And there’s a whale hung up so’s you can see him top and bottom. They are about the only things that are much good for a fellow to see. You go to matinees, but they are always the ones the governess wants to see with lords and dukes and a lot of silly parlor chatter—not even so good as our Uncle Tom. Oh, yes, you go to lunch with dad downtown sometimes, and that’s not so bad because his offices are away up in the skyscrapers

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where you can see the ships in both rivers. I forgot the theatre circus when the clown fishes a bull pup out of the water, and he dives into the water—the clown does—and never comes up out of it, but chases in from somewhere else. Lots of fairies and things duck under the water and stop there as long as they like—pretty good fun, too—and——”

At the sound of Len's fast breathing Orrey stopped his careless recital of the few things in city life worth mentioning, and looking at Len asked: “What's the matter, old chap? Your eyes are popping out.”

After a long talk such as boys have when they are out of hearing of grown-ups, Orrey learned that the things he had so indifferently recalled had fired Len's imagination as no story out of a book could have done. Then Orrey wrote to his mother a letter, a part of which read:

“I wish you would write to Len's father and mother and ask if he can't come home with me for the vacation. He's the best fellow I ever knew, and we are going to college together to learn football right, and then we're going to farm it together, mostly butter and pigs. He never saw a place bigger than Rutland and can't understand about going twenty floors up to Dad's office because he never saw an elevator nor a buf-

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falo nor an aquarium. So, please, I'd like to have him visit us, and Scudder can come for him, though he isn't afraid to travel alone."

The result of this was that it became known at school that Len was to visit New York. From that moment he became a being apart from the others in school; was looked upon and treated as one who was not wholly of their world, an elected one set aside from the daily run of things. Len himself was in a daze from which no effort of Miss King, the new teacher, could rouse him. She could not even count upon his services in the exercises, for he could not learn the shortest part in the play they were to perform.

The district school was on a knoll at the crossing of two roads, and no man or woman living could remember when the building did not look old and weather-beaten. It was approached by a crescent-shaped path whose ends led to the two roads, and before the door were steps made from flour-mill grindstones, and only owls had inhabited the mill as long as anyone could remember. There had been occasional repairs to the clap-board side and shingle roof of the schoolhouse, but the hewn rafters and board walls of the in-

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terior were as they had been many generations ago.

On closing exercises day the one room of the schoolhouse was crowded, children close up to the platform, elders back to the very door, inclined to be critical of the new-fangled teacher who had thrown away all the slates as unhealthful; but they agreed that the evergreens and red berries decorated the old rafters better than the colored paper which was the chief reliance in such matters in their days. The new teacher had her triumph early when she sat down at the little organ and announced that the exercises would begin with the singing of " 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' all joining in, if you please." The song had scarcely begun before it stopped; the new teacher rose and, looking over at the elders as severely as she could out of jolly brown eyes, said, "I notice that few of our visitors are singing: those who are not cannot be patriotic, so I must request them to go outside until the song is finished."

After an amazed silence a cheer started from back near the door where Scudder sat, then some hand clapping, then general cheering and

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laughter, with cries of "Good for you, teacher! Start again, and we'll all join in."

And they did, with such a burst of emotion that Grandpa Prendle rose at the end of the song and said to Miss King, "You may be new-fangled, Miss, but you've some mighty good old-fashioned ideas, and I thank you for reminding us of one of them."

After that the exercises went with a vim, except as to Orrey's part. He was to make the closing speech, a prophecy of the lives of the children, written by Miss King. When Orrey had made his bow some one started hand clapping. Nothing like that had happened until after each exercise, and Orrey was so flustered when all the pupils took up the applause that he delivered his speech in a very shaky voice.

On the next day the boys left for New York. The big sleigh was loaded with their trunks, and the Twins were invited to ride to the station with the travelers, Towser running along behind, never turning to the right or left even when the road was crossed by an invitingly fresh scent of rabbits. The children had much to talk about and chatted gayly all the way to the station, but

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Scudder was unusually silent. It was not until the train rolled up that he said:

“Good-by, Orrey. You’ll be back again—in the spring?”

“Yes, in the spring,” answered Orrey, confidently. “Good-by, till then.”

(1)

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